

## **Note of Roundtable Meeting with Directors of Education**

### **Note of Roundtable meeting between Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills and Directors of Education: Improvement in Context of Results Day Data 20 August 2024, 14:00-15:00 (via Teams)**

#### **Attended by:**

Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills (Chair)  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Deputy Private Secretary to Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Clare Hicks, Director of Education Reform, Scottish Government  
Laura Murdoch, Deputy Director, Curriculum & Qualifications, Scottish Government  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Head of School Qualifications Unit, Scottish Government  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Head of the National Qualifications Team, Scottish Government  
Alison Taylor, Deputy Director, Improvement, Attainment & Wellbeing, Scottish Government  
Pete Whitehouse, Deputy Director, Education Analytical Services  
Gillian Hamilton, Interim Chief Executive, Education Scotland  
Janie McManus, Interim Chief Inspector, HMIE  
Patricia Watson, Strategic Director - Scrutiny, Education Scotland  
Fiona Robertson, Chief Examining Officer, SQA  
Martyn Ware, Director of Policy, Analysis and Standards, SQA  
Chris Boulter, Head of Data and Analytics, SQA  
Directors of Education, ADES and COSLA (see Annex A)

#### **Note of Discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Secretary thanked Directors for attending to discuss the shared aim of improving outcomes for children and young people in light of the data arising from Results Day, and in the context of the ongoing legacy of the Covid pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and fiscal challenges. It was acknowledged exam results fluctuate year to year with some variation to be expected, and recognised that local authorities are already undertaking work to drive improvement, including the setting of stretch aims, and will be reflecting on progress and achievements of young people in their schools and analysing the data to understand strengths and where further improvements are required. The meeting was set as an opportunity to reflect on progress to date and how the system can work together to mutually reinforce and focus collective activity to drive improvements, to inform the publication of this year's National Improvement Framework.
2. Fiona Robertson (SQA) provided an overview of the 2024 senior phase attainment data highlighting:
  - Record numbers of vocational and technical qualifications
  - National 5 and Higher pass rates broadly in line with 2019 position
  - SIMD variances
  - Dual and double entries

3. In relation to the return to full course assessment, SQA observed that learners engaged with coursework and performed well. The importance of careful consideration of presentation decisions was highlighted, and it was advised that the SQA programme of Understanding Standards events will continue with further commentary in individual course reports, to be published soon.
4. Janie McManus (HMIE) provided some reflections from HMIE inspections setting out key areas that contributed to schools receiving very good or excellent ratings compared to weak and satisfactory schools. This included quality of learning and teaching, effective tracking and monitoring, and confident and accurate assessment judgements.
5. Sheena Devlin (ADES) provided some reflections from an ADES perspective, setting out that local authorities will be taking the time from now to December to undertake analysis of data to inform forward improvement plans, drawing also from wider research and evidence. The complexity of the system and influence of primary predictors such as deprivation, additional support needs, parental engagement, and geography was highlighted, but also the importance of leadership and culture in driving improvements.
6. Wider discussion referenced the challenges around teacher recruitment (particularly in more rural parts of the country), attendance, consensus of how to bring about improvement, what is measured and how (including different approaches locally and nationally, and SEEMIS), and the current fiscal position. The importance of a longer-term view and need to consider improvements at early learning stage and through the broad general education, as well shorter-term improvements at senior phase, was highlighted.
7. The Cabinet Secretary set out a desire for officials and ADES to undertake further meetings to explore what work can collectively be taken forward to tackle the known issues and what more can be done to support meaningful improvement at all levels. The Cabinet Secretary thought it would be helpful if any future session with ADES could include consideration of early learning and childcare priorities

#### **ACTIONS:**

**Officials, SQA and HMIE to engage further with ADES (including through the ADES Performance and Improvement Network as appropriate) to determine improvement priorities which would benefit from further joint exploration and work; and to take that work forward at pace.**

## ATTENDANCE OF DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION, ADES AND COSLA

### Association of Directors of Education (ADES)

Carrie Lindsay, Executive Officer

Colin Grant – Professional Development Officer, ADES

### COSLA

Cllr Buchanan, Spokesperson for Children and Young People

Nicola Dickie, Director

Matthew Sweeney, Policy Manager

### Directors of Education

Council	Name	Position
Aberdeen City Council	Eleanor Sheppard	Chief Education Officer
Aberdeenshire Council	Laurence Findlay	Director of Education and Children's Services
Angus Council	Kelly McIntosh	Head of Schools and Learning
Argyll & Bute Council	Jennifer Crockett	Chief Education Officer/ Head of Education: Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement
Argyll & Bute Council	Wendy Brownlie	Head of Education: Performance and Improvement
City of Edinburgh Council	Lorna French	Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning
City of Edinburgh Council	Amanda Hatton	Executive Director for Education and Children's Services
Clackmannanshire Council	Colin Bruce	Chief Education Officer
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	Donald A. Macleod	Director of Education & Children's Services
Dumfries & Galloway Council	Alison Chambers and Jim Brown <i>in place of</i> Gillian Brydson	(Quality Improvement Manager)  (Head of Education (Quality & Curriculum) & Chief Education Officer)  <i>Director of Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning</i>
Dundee City Council	Audrey May	Executive Director
Dundee City Council	Paul Fleming	Head of Education, Learning and Inclusion
East Ayrshire Council	Linda Mcaulay-Griffiths	Head of Education
East Dunbartonshire Council	Greg Bremner	Chief Education Officer
East Lothian Council	Nicola McDowell <i>in place of</i> Lesley Brown	(Head of Education)  <i>Executive Director for Education &amp; Children's Services</i>

<b>Council</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
East Renfrewshire Council	<b>Janice Collins</b> <i>in place of</i> <i>Mark Ratter</i>	(Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement))  <i>Director of Education</i>
Falkirk Council	Jon Reid	Director of Education
Fife Council	Donald Macleod	Executive Director Education and Children's Services
Glasgow City Council	Douglas Hutchison	Executive Director of Education
Highland Council	Kate Lackie	Head of Education
Inverclyde Council	Michael Roach <i>in place of</i> <i>Ruth Binks</i>	(Head of Education)  <i>Director of Education &amp; Communities</i>
Midlothian Council	Fiona Robertson	Executive Director
Moray Council	Vivienne Cross	Head of Schools and Curriculum Development
Moray Council	Denise Whitworth	Depute Chief Executive: Education, Communities & Organisational Development
North Ayrshire Council	Andrew McClelland	Exec Director Youth Employment
North Lanarkshire Council	Gerard McLaughlin	Chief Officer
Orkney Islands Council	James Wylie	Director of Education, Leisure and Housing
Perth & Kinross Council	Sheena Devlin	Executive Director of Education and Children's Services
Renfrewshire Council	Janie O'Neill	Director of Children's Services
Scottish Borders Council	Justin Sinclair	Chief Education Officer
Scottish Borders Council	Lesley Munro	Director – Education & Lifelong Learning'
Shetland Islands Council	Samantha Flaws <i>in place of</i> <i>Helen Budge</i>	(Executive Manager)  <i>Director of Children's Services</i>
South Ayrshire Council	Lyndsay McRoberts	Director of Education
South Lanarkshire Council	Anne Donaldson <i>in place of</i> <i>Carole McKenzie</i>	(Head of Education (Inclusion))  <i>Executive Director, Education Resources</i>
Stirling Council	Bryony Monaghan	Interim Head of Education (Chief Education Officer)
West Dunbartonshire Council	Laura Mason	Chief Education Officer / Strategic Lead - Education, Learning and Attainment
West Lothian Council	Elaine Cook	Director of Education