

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Foghlam agus Sgilean
Jenny Gilruth MSP
Jenny NicGilleRuaidh BPA

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Kenneth Lawrie
Chief Executive
Falkirk Council
By email only: chief.executive@falkirk.gov.uk

Jon Reid
Director of Education
Falkirk Council
By email only: section [38\(1\)\(b\) @falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:38(1)(b)@falkirk.gov.uk)

19 June 2024

Dear Kenneth and John,

I am writing to you regarding the ongoing consultation on changing learning hours in schools across your local authority area. I appreciate that Councils have responsibility for delivery of education services in their areas, including the number of hours of learning children and young people receive; but given the level of concern raised to me, I want to emphasise the Scottish Government's position to you today.

We have received a high volume of correspondence from concerned parents and carers on the changes being proposed reducing learning hours in Falkirk, with many highlighting the negative impact a shorter school week would have on both pupils and their families who must balance learning with employment as well as childcare. I know that some of these letters have been copied to local Councillors and I would like to stress how important it is to listen to these community views.

I appreciate that difficult decisions are having to be made by all local authorities in the current fiscal context, however I would like to restate the Scottish Government's opposition to any reduction of learning hours, and that I remain committed to protecting the levels of learning hours currently made available in Scottish schools.

I explained this in a letter to COSLA in February, where I stressed that government's vision for education in Scotland remains to deliver excellence and equity for all. That principle must be central to our thinking. As noted in that letter, a key element of that is to ensure there is no reduction in the fundamentals of education delivery, including the amount of time children spend learning with teachers in schools.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

As you will be aware, the current model adopted by the majority of local authorities of 25 hours per week in primary schools and 27.5 hours per week in secondary schools. Local authorities who have an asymmetric week also provide these hours with a shorter day on Friday and longer days from Monday to Thursday. My officials have advised me that your authority provides 25 hours for Primary Schools and 26 hours and 40 minutes for secondary schools.

I am keen to come to an agreement with local government on the provision of learning hours to ensure there are no reductions to current provision. In the longer term I am also keen to work with local government toward equity in the number of learning hours pupils across Scotland receive.

However, to ensure that we do not see any reductions in learning hours in any part of Scotland, I have instructed officials to prepare for the introduction of regulations prescribing the number of hours to be made available from the start of the 2025/26 academic year, in the event that no agreement with local government can be reached.

I understand that you are seeking comments on this issue until 28 June, and I am pleased to see that you are engaging with pupils too. I am also aware that you met with Scottish Government officials on the matter last month where you stressed the difficult financial challenges facing the local authority. I understand that Education Scotland also offered further support at this meeting if required and that my officials restated our position that I have outlined above.

I encourage you to continue to engage with members of the public on this matter and consider their concerns. My officials are also happy to continue to engage with you throughout this process.

Yours sincerely



JENNY GILRUTH

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Silver

