

## INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION ADVISERS

### ENSURING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION EXISTS THROUGHOUT SCOTTISH EDUCATION

#### PAPER BY SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT LEARNING DIRECTORATE

#### Current Position

1. Collaboration and partnership working are already strong features of Scottish education. At a school level there are a number of examples of strong school clusters and partnerships, but there is no consistent model of cluster working. There is some evidence of local authorities collaborating, notably through the Northern Alliance and Tayside Children's Services Collaborative, but again these are individual examples of good practice rather than a consistent approach.

2. The International Council considered a paper on *Building Collaboration and Collective Responsibility in Scottish Education* in February. In discussion the Council identified the need to move away from pockets of excellence working in isolation; the importance of leadership; learning from local and international evidence and the importance of embedding collaborative enquiry. In the report of their initial findings the Council set out the following recommendations to ensure the development of a culture of collaboration at a classroom, school, regional and national level. The Scottish Government should:

- Consider incentivising collaboration by making it one of the required criteria for any financial programme;
- Establish a national training programme on how to collaborate fully;
- Look at creating federations of schools.

3. The Council also recommended that the Scottish Government should:

- Learn from existing attempts to formally share education services between local authorities e.g. the Northern Alliance, and other forms of non-structural regionalisation that have been successful internationally; and
- Create learning hubs around the country where educational professionals can go to learn about different elements of educational practice.

#### Education Governance - Next Steps

4. Our aspiration is to create an education system which seeks out evidence of good practice and learns from that practice to improve outcomes. We need, therefore, to embed a culture where practitioners and establishments look to learn from each other and work together to address challenges. In delivering the changes that are needed, we are clear that structural change alone will not deliver the

required change in culture. Instead we must tackle culture, capacity and structure to deliver the necessary change, and the *Next Steps* document published in June 2017 set out a number of planned reforms. The proposals which relate specifically to collaborative working do not exist in isolation and need to be viewed as part of a wider package of reform to empower our schools and teachers, support leadership and professional learning.

### Vision and framework

5. Currently there is no clear national vision or framework to support collaboration and teachers and practitioners expressed concern during consultation on the governance review that existing governance structures often make collaboration harder. We have therefore committed to providing a clear vision and framework within which effective school level collaboration can take place. This vision and framework will be developed with partners and will include the development of resources and tools to support collaborative approaches in the classroom. The question of how to incentivise collaboration could also be included within this framework

6. We note that the Council has previously referred to the development of a national training programme on how to collaborate fully. We are very mindful of the need to ensure that any resources or tools are based on evidence, and the balance between developing a national resource and ensuring local flexibility and ownership.

### School level collaboration – learning journey clusters and school improvement partnerships

7. We know that many teachers, practitioners and schools are already working collaboratively. The model of collaborative working differs, but when it does take place effectively it has a demonstrable and positive impact on children and young people. We have identified two key models of school level collaboration – the school cluster model and an improvement model focused on a shared challenge.

8. We are committed to supporting schools and establishments to work together in learning journey clusters focused on the child. Schools and establishments in a school cluster – most commonly the early years, primary schools and secondary schools associated within one locality or learning community – could work with other partners to plan, develop and deliver a coherent 3-18 curriculum offer, plan and focus on outcomes, address transitions, identify and support learning needs and work collaboratively to address the needs of the children within their learning community. This would be a long term collaborative relationship.

9. Clusters are an important element in school level collaboration but the intention is that they should be part of a wider commitment to collaborative working. The School Improvement Partnership Programme evaluation published in 2015 set out the positive impact on educational inequity of school improvement partnerships. Schools will be supported through the regional improvement collaboratives to identify priority areas and potential collaborative partners. The focus will be on linking schools which either have a shared challenge or where one school is keen to learn from successful practice in another school.

10. Collaboration can cover a wide range of practice, require local leadership, buy-in and direction, but without an external prompt and support such collaborative partnerships often struggle. It is important therefore that schools and practitioners feel empowered to shape their partnerships, but that support is provided to address barriers and drive collaboration. Collaboration should be shaped and led at a local level but the expectation will be that everyone within the system will be working collaboratively.

#### Regional improvement collaboratives

11. As set out in 'Next Steps' we are committed to establishing regional improvement collaboratives across Scotland to embed collaboration across all of our schools. The collaboratives will provide enhanced educational improvement support for headteachers, teachers and practitioners. This will include curriculum area specialist support and hands-on improvement support. They will provide a coherent focus across all partners through the delivery of an annual regional plan and associated work programme aligned to the National Improvement Framework, and will facilitate collaborative working. 'Next Steps' set out an initial expectation that we will establish up to seven regional improvement collaboratives, although the exact geography of the proposed collaboratives is currently under discussion with Local Government. The establishment of the regional improvement collaboratives will build on the partnership working which is already taking place, and the Scottish Government and Local Government have set up a joint Steering Group to develop proposals to support this. The remit for the Group encompasses proposals for the guiding principles which will frame the work of the collaboratives, the required functions, leadership, staffing, geography, accountability and the approach to measuring success.

12. It is important that the new collaboratives reflect evidence from the rest of the UK and internationally about what works in developing and embedding collaboration. We have looked closely at the Welsh model for regional collaboration in developing our plans but are interested in exploring the learning from Ontario, New Zealand and elsewhere.

#### **The Council is asked to consider:**

- **How can a national framework support collaboration at a school and regional level while ensuring the appropriate balance between local ownership and external drive? (paras 5-6)**
- **How best can regional improvement collaboratives support school level collaboration, ensuring the pace and relentless focus on improvement that 'Next Steps' sets out? (paras 7-10)**
- **Which models of collaborative working at a school or a regional level should influence the development of collaborative working in Scotland? (paras 11-12)**

- **How the regional improvement collaboratives should approach 'measuring success' or evaluation**

Scottish Government  
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