

Appendices C to L - question-by-question analysis

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Appendix C: | 5 |
| Overview of responses | 5 |
| Curriculum | 5 |
| Learning models | 7 |
| Wellbeing | 8 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 9 |
| Prevalent themes in group discussions | 9 |
| Differences by sub-group | 9 |
| Group Discussion Q7. Did your group talk about anything else relevant to the future of learning?..... | 11 |
| Appendix D: Q2. How do we make that a reality? | 13 |
| Overview of responses | 13 |
| Teacher training, standards, recruitment and retention..... | 13 |
| Curriculum review and subject-specific suggestions | 14 |
| Prevalent overarching themes..... | 15 |
| Recurring themes | 15 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 17 |
| Differences by sub-group | 17 |
| Appendix E: Q3. How can every child and young person’s individual needs be supported and addressed in the future?..... | 18 |
| Overview of responses | 18 |
| Additional Support Needs and Inclusion..... | 18 |
| Education tailored to the individual..... | 19 |
| Other recurring themes..... | 20 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 20 |
| Differences by sub-group | 21 |
| Group Discussion Q8. Did your group talk about anything else relevant to the future of equity in education? | 22 |
| Appendix F: Q4. What is one thing that needs to stay and why?..... | 23 |
| Overview of responses | 23 |
| Literacy and numeracy | 23 |
| Recurring overarching themes | 23 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 24 |
| Differences by sub-group | 26 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Appendix G: Q5. What are the most important priorities for a future Scottish education system? | 27 |
| Overview of responses | 27 |
| Curriculum review and subject-specific suggestions | 27 |
| Prevalent overarching themes | 28 |
| Other recurring themes..... | 29 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 30 |
| Differences by sub-group | 31 |
| Appendix H: Q6. How can we ensure that everyone involved in education in Scotland has a say in future decisions and actions? | 33 |
| Overview..... | 33 |
| Who should be listened to | 33 |
| How to ask..... | 34 |
| Listen and act | 35 |
| Support and accessibility | 35 |
| Regular listening | 35 |
| Trust and transparency..... | 35 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 36 |
| Differences by sub-group | 36 |
| Appendix I: Q7. How can children and young people be cared for and supported in the future? (i.e. physical and mental wellbeing)..... | 38 |
| Overview of responses | 38 |
| Pastoral care and wellbeing | 38 |
| Access to school-based mental health support | 39 |
| Physical health and education..... | 39 |
| Funding..... | 39 |
| Working with parents and families | 39 |
| Staff training and guidance..... | 40 |
| Recurring themes | 40 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 41 |
| Differences by sub-group | 42 |
| Appendix J: Q8. How can the right of every child and young person to have opportunities to develop their full potential be achieved in future? | 43 |
| Overview of responses | 43 |
| Prevalent overarching themes..... | 43 |
| Less commonly mentioned themes | 44 |
| Differences by sub-group | 46 |

Group Discussion Q10. Did your group talk about anything else relevant to the future of rights in education? 46

Appendix K: Q9. How can children and young people be helped to learn about our changing world, so they feel able to positively contribute? 48

- Overview of responses 48
- Teach it as part of the curriculum 48
- Provide information and knowledge 49
- Develop a sense of responsibility and citizenship 49
- Specific environmental suggestions 49
- Work with local community and wider society 49
- Open discussion 50
- Listen to young people and their interests 50
- Creative and critical thinkers 50
- Other ways of learning 50
- Sensitivity and honesty 51
- Less commonly mentioned themes 51
- Group discussions 52
- Differences by sub-group 52

Appendix L: Q10. Do you have any other comments that you would like to provide about a vision for the future of Scottish Education? 54

- Overview of responses 54
- Prevalent overarching themes 54
- Negative comments about Scottish Education 55
- Less commonly mentioned themes 55

Appendix C: Q1. What kind of education will be needed by children and young people in Scotland in the future?

Overview of responses

Almost all consultation participants responded to Q1. The broad nature of the question meant a wide range of themes were evident in responses, and the vast majority of comments aligned with the overarching themes outlined in the main report. This was also true of the corresponding group discussion question, though several themes featured more prominently in the group discussions than in the main sample.

Comments on the kind of education that will be needed in the future typically fell into three areas: reflections on the curriculum, approaches to teaching, and a focus on student and staff wellbeing.

Curriculum

The most prevalent theme identified across responses to Q1 was the need to teach young people the skills they need for the future. Within these comments, four strands of skills were shared including:

- practical, transferrable skills for the world of work, including meta skills like leadership and problem solving, were mentioned by several participants
- the importance of financial education, including understanding mortgages, budgets, credit and bills, was also highlighted by several participants
- the value of other life skills, particularly around diet and health eating, cooking, making clothes, living sustainably, and cleaning, which was mentioned by some
- general comments made by several participants around the need for skills-based learning, without elaborating on what type of skills would be required or stating that young people would need skills ‘for the future’

“How taxes work, how life works and more actually functional things instead of stupid things like algebra.” – Learner

“More life skills education through S1/2 including mortgages, taxes, banking, cooking, and buying and selling houses, writing a CV, jobs available.” – Learner

“Life Skills - go shopping, open bank account, plan a school trip - booking, time-keeping, skills you would use at home, e.g. cooking, cleaning, laundry.” – Learner

“Education about the world that we're preparing to go into. Life after primary, high school, or even university. I think there should be a lot more education about adulthood to make us feel more prepared for when we leave school!” - Learner

Other themes relevant to the curriculum, each mentioned by several participants included:

- the importance of literacy and numeracy skills
- creating confident and proficient technology users, including how to become digitally literate and understanding the possible harms caused by technology
- calls for topical or relevant courses and classes, such as contemporary politics, environmentalism, sustainability, human rights, social issues and sex education

“I think we will need computing for things that are online which will be nearly every job in the world.” – Learner

“Coding and things about computers. Our world like climate change, environment and how to save our world even more than we get now. Some first aid, how to cook and how to clean. More languages.” – Learner

“Children need to learn skills that are transferable in a rapidly changing world, to accept and value cultural differences to be able to work in a global community, and to consider sustainability in all they do.” – Teacher

Some participants highlighted their support for a broad, holistic, balanced and well-rounded curriculum which provides choice for young people in their courses and subjects and encompasses all skills. Broadly similar proportions of participants championed specific subject areas. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects were most frequently mentioned, followed by the arts and languages. Similar numbers also noted the importance of including physical education (PE), physical activity and social subjects in the curriculum.

More generally, some participants expressed a view that the curriculum should be strong, robust, comprehensive, modern, engaging and inspiring. They recognised that this may require redesign or reform, with a few feeling that the current curriculum is too cluttered. There were also some calls from some for an adaptable curriculum which responds to social changes. In these comments, it was noted that students' needs may change over the years and the curriculum must be able to adapt.

Another theme raised by some for the system to move away from a focus on exams and standardised testing, with various views expressed as outlined in the main report.

“I think the curriculum needs an overhaul. Whilst I think that all children should learn the basics of History, Geography, RE, etc to see if they have

an interest in it, I don't think it is necessary for them to be forced to learn about all the Kings/Queens in England and further afield along with religious groups and where they originate from etc. So few children need this information when they leave school. How to use a computer properly, how to do CPR and basic first aid, how to set up a business and do basic accounting, and many more practical things should be taught which have a meaning to everyone. It is trades people that we need so the basics of plumbing, electrics and joinery are also important. I appreciate that some children are more academically minded, and they should be able to learn the more in depth subjects should they wish to.” – Parent

“Somebody somewhere decided once that physics is more important than PE or Art.” – Edinburgh College, as part of children’s organisations focus group

Learning models

The overarching theme of having flexible, independent and inclusive learning pathways was the second most common theme identified in responses to Q1. Within these responses, there were calls to change how schools understand and engage with the learning process. Participants explained that this spans inclusive approaches to teaching, and offering academic, creative and vocational courses. This was also the most prevalent theme in group discussions, where there was additional emphasis on hands-on learning and learning through doing.

Several participants advocated for a creative and critical thinking approach to teaching, which equips students to analyse and synthesise information, solve problems, and aims to foster a love of learning and life-long learners. This was the second most prevalent theme in group discussions at Q1.

Calls for approaches which enable a focus on individual learners were made by some, including a child-centred approach that allows students to develop at their own pace and follow their own interests. Other recurring themes raised by some participants included the importance of early years, particularly the need to create a kindergarten period or start formal education at age 6 or 7, and comments on the value of work-based learning, such as including vocational options and courses in the curriculum and offering opportunities around work experience and apprenticeships.

“An education system that has structured and varied opportunities. Some pupils will find that they thrive best doing written exams. However some pupils find that they are best at practical based subjects and are more of a visual learner.” - Learner

“Genuinely inclusive but also really listening to individuals with additional support needs and the people around them about what they really need for education to work for them - specialist support is crucial for this - shared campuses work well. Diversity should be celebrated, and the range of learning styles should be considered at all times.” – Social Enterprise Academy

“Children all thought there should be a bigger focus on outdoor learning and less time spent in a classroom. They felt that schools in the future should take into account different ways to learn and not put such a heavy emphasis on writing in jotters. Learning should be more about doing.” – Anonymous children and young people group

“Poverty Proof Pedagogy: Staff continue to innovate against the effects of poverty in their classrooms. Direct professional development on learning and teaching strategies that can help Senior phase pupils in certificate classes would be really beneficial. It would also be useful to look at monitoring and tracking processes that engage those pupils and families on the edge of education who can be at risk of disengaging with the school community due to socio economic challenges.” - Kilwinning Academy Staff Consultation (teachers group)

Wellbeing

Wellbeing and support for students and staff was the third strand of comments at Q1 and many comments called for a greater focus on pastoral care and emotional support. This included supporting and teaching wellbeing and enabling staff to practice self-care to allow them to be in good health to help their students.

Some participants argued that young people should have an education which aids emotional development, particularly resilience but also confidence, independence, and personal responsibility. A system which incorporates respect and acceptance was also mentioned in a small proportion of responses.

Helping young people to develop social skills and engage constructively with their local community was another theme raised by some. This included comments on ways to engage with communities, such as volunteering and participating in youth work activities, learning about interpersonal skills including communication and collaboration, and improving understanding of antisocial, harmful or risky behaviours, for example, gambling. More broadly, a small proportion of participants felt that education should result in young people being ready to be part of society and be global citizens.

The overarching theme of providing more, better, or specialist ASN support was noted by some participants at Q1.

“Better education on mental health. Also having an education that doesn’t overwhelm and cause severe, crippling anxiety for pupils.” – Learner

“In secondary schools young people need Health and Wellbeing teachers who are trained, interested, experienced and QUALIFIED to deliver crucial advice and guidance on matters that are important to their future health, success and impact.” – Teacher

“Early years and Primary which focus on holistic development, good mental health, meaningful connections and relationship building. Foster a love of learning, encourages problem solving and lots of opportunity for

cooperative learning. Much more focus on being outside in a well-resourced environment.” – Teacher

“Emotional and social development. How to help themselves have a healthy nervous system and how to interact positively & resourcefully with peers around them.” – Parent

“Have a focus on Health & Wellbeing, making sure that there is a safe space and available staff to support pupils who are struggling. People need a safe place to go and calm down and someone safe to speak to when they are upset, overwhelmed or angry.” – Anonymous children and young people group

Less commonly mentioned themes

All other themes raised by a small proportion of participants at Q1 have been covered in the main report, except for general negative comments about, what a few respondents consider, the current poor state of Scottish education.

Prevalent themes in group discussions

Several themes featured more prominently in the group discussion responses to Q1 compared to the main sample. These included: specific comments about the curriculum and subjects; more teaching of life-skills; to have a curriculum which is adaptable for the changing world and includes topical, relevant learning; for education to produce confident young people who can contribute to society; a need for high quality, well trained teaching staff; and comments about exams and assessment.

Differences by sub-group

Many differences in the prevalence of themes were evident across sub-groups, in particular between the views expressed by learners, parents and teaching staff.

The most prevalent theme among learners was for education to help develop their digital literacy, followed by skills to help prepare for work. Learners were more likely than parents and teachers to mention PE and physical fitness, but were less likely to mention flexible learning pathways and a flexible, an adaptable curriculum, focusing on each individual young person, more ASN support, or discipline.

Among parents, flexible learning pathways and literacy and numeracy were most mentioned, followed by financial life skills and general comments around pastoral care and wellbeing. This group were more likely than learners or teachers to mention the need for more ASN support.

Most prevalent among teaching staff were comments about flexible learning pathways and pastoral care and wellbeing. While skills-based learning was commonly mentioned by this group, they were less likely to specifically mention financial and diet related skills than learners or parents. Teaching staff were more likely than learners or parents to mention: fostering creative and critical thinking, the need for more teachers, the importance of early years education, and funding.

Other notable differences included:

- organisations were more likely than individuals to say that future education will need to foster creative and critical learning, develop digital literacy and to produce confident and resilient young people
- the small number of ethnic minority participants were much less likely than other groups to call for skills-based learning or teaching of life skills
- there was more interest in learning about topical issues among the small number of LGBTI+ participants than the overall sample, and this group were also much less likely to mention learning skills to help prepare them for work

Group Discussion Q7. Did your group talk about anything else relevant to the future of learning?

This was an optional question in the guide for group discussions which could be asked at the facilitator's discretion. Around half of groups responded to this question and their views very clearly aligned with the consultation's overarching themes.

The most common themes mentioned by at least some groups were:

- comments about changes to the curriculum or about specific subjects, including calls to declutter the curriculum, update courses to reflect the modern world, and focus on literacy and numeracy
- more and better training for teaching staff to maintain standards, including opportunities to share best practice and time for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- improved pay and working conditions for teaching staff
- investment in education
- the importance of pastoral care and wellbeing
- including more work-based learning in the curriculum, including links with employers, to ensure young people are prepared for work when leaving school
- working in partnership with other external agencies, including the third sector and youth work organisations
- ensuring equity in education, including addressing financial barriers to education, such as access to free school meals and schools having Pupil Equity Funding
- ensuring school buildings, facilities and equipment are safe and fit for purpose
- the importance of listening to children's voices
- empowering teachers

“It is important to consider the attainment of teachers, there should be a continuing assessment of all teachers to ensure the highest standard of education is provided, at the moment we all know of some teachers who shouldn't be in their role, have greater transparency with regard to teachers' skill levels.” – Anonymous parents group

“The Widening Access to university agenda created an even larger status gap between post-compulsory education sectors. We assume this is unwitting, but this has not been a great success. Status of education is at the heart of this and where you study and to what level ultimately shouldn’t matter in a progressive society. Scotland needs to be brave – our system is currently good but doesn’t fit all and it will be a brave move to alter it to make it truly socially just.” – Anonymous group

Appendix D: Q2. How do we make that a reality?

Overview of responses

Over nine in ten participants answered Q2. Because of the link between the two questions, there was overlap in the comments made at Q2 and Q1; some participants reiterated their vision in response to Q2, while others focused on how the vision could become reality. Almost all the themes evident at Q2 align with the overarching themes described in the main report.

Teacher training, standards, recruitment and retention

Workforce development was the most common theme in responses to Q2. This element of the discussion centred on three main areas, echoing those outlined in Chapter 2 of the main report. Several participants called for more and better training of teaching staff at all levels to ensure high standards of education. This issue was less prevalent in group discussions, but participants did note the importance of sharing good practice and the need for subject-specific professional learning.

More specifically, some participants suggested more rigid teaching standards could improve the quality of teaching. These comments spanned: minimum qualifications to enter teaching, such as post graduate degrees; regular reviews and assessments; and enforced retirements. On recruitment and retention, a few noted the role of consistent teaching staff in improving student outcomes, and participants described a need for clear career paths, flexible training options, better salaries and benefits, and reduced administrative responsibilities.

“Other avenues for Professionals to change career into Teaching rather than having to give up full time employment and pay to make the move to Teaching. This will give a more diverse workforce with lives life experience. Teachers should not be promoted before at least having five years Teaching experience.” – Individual

“More assistants with different training that will equip them well enough to specifically help children who have different learning styles. Resources, more resources for teachers to work with, being physical aids, online or training if required to help support them in their ever changing jobs.” – Parent

“Improved teacher training, with higher entry standards. Better ongoing in-house, in-person, CPD opportunities, easily accessible for staff.” – Teacher

“Providing more funding for Early Years Teachers to secure specialist qualifications. Providing additional opportunities for qualifications for Early Years Practitioners.” - Teacher

Curriculum review and subject-specific suggestions

Another prevalent theme was how the curriculum could be changed. These comments fell into four distinct categories: subject-specific suggestions; general comments about the structure of the curriculum; a desire for a more thorough review or overhaul of the curriculum; and alternative or creative approaches to teaching. These again align with the overarching priorities outlined in Chapter 2 of the main report and are covered briefly here.

Mixed views on the curriculum structure were expressed. Several participants stressed a need to streamline or declutter the curriculum, while a few supported broadening it or widening the range of courses available. Similarly, some preferred a more traditional approach based on previous educational models, while others advocated for an innovative, contemporary education that responds to future needs. Curriculum structure was the second most common theme in group discussions; these echoed the comments described above and also expanded to consider the role of interdisciplinary learning and cross-curricular design.

Some participants recommended specific subjects they believed should be a part of the curriculum to make future success a reality for Scotland's children and young people. Many suggested skills-based courses should feature in the curriculum, including life skills or job-related skills, such as practical, technical or communication skills. Some participants highlighted the importance of literacy and numeracy as a core element of education, and others emphasised social subjects, particularly a comprehensive and contextualised approach to teaching history, languages, and amended Personal and Social Education (PSE) courses.

Some participants noted a specific interest in the curriculum review process, highlighting a need for further research, involvement of experts, and support for implementing the recommendations of reports, such as the Muir Report and the OECD reports. Others felt Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) should be dismantled, while a few others highlighted a need to create a curriculum and stick with it, with the assertions that teachers and schools should be supported and empowered to create resources for successful implementation.

The need for creative, active, engaging, challenging and fun methods of teaching or pedagogical approaches in the classroom, and to 'think outside the box' was highlighted by a few participants. They highlighted the value of methods such as group work, topic work and larger projects, as well as outcome-orientated approaches, such as learning through mistakes or storytelling to build empathy.

"You could change the PSE course, as there are some topics in the course that aren't extremely well thought out or really 100% necessary. The course could be changed to include more life skills and real world problems that we will face as adults, and how to tackle and solve these." - Learner

"By rewriting the vastly outdated curriculum. Don't bow to pressure to add in all sorts of non-essential items and focus on real life skills that will benefit children after school." – Parent

“By making learning more fun, and stop frowning upon what [young people] want to be and how they want to do it.” – Learner

“Need to make education pathway coherent and planned from early years to S6. Gaps from Primary are embedded and hard to "fix".” – West Calder High School (Teacher group)

Prevalent overarching themes

Other frequently raised themes at Q2, each suggested by several participants and prevalent in the group discussions, were:

- investing in education; this was also the most prevalent theme in group discussions, with calls for ring-fenced funding for staff and resources
- having more teachers, smaller class sizes, and more pupil support staff; the need for more specialist teachers, e.g. art, music and PE, was also mentioned by some
- improving staff pay and working conditions

Recurring themes

Multiple themes were raised by some participants at Q2, most of which are overarching themes covered in the main report. These included, from most to least mentioned:

- more, better, and more specialised ASN support
- various points about exams, testing and assessment, with little consensus on the best approach for the future
- pastoral care and wellbeing
- the need for a variety of flexible learning pathways to ensure there are options available for all young people
- helping young people develop confidence, resilience and social skills
- having school buildings and facilities which are modern and fit for purpose
- improving digital skills and digital literacy
- listening to pupils’ voices, and their choices
- increasing the number of pupil support staff
- empowering teachers and school and listen to the voice of teaching staff
- getting young people ready for work, work-based learning and vocational positive destinations
- more and better provision of technology in schools
- outdoor learning opportunities
- the value of play-based learning
- focusing on the needs of each individual young person

- for the education system to create creative and critical thinkers with a love of learning and a curiosity to explore, debate and challenge the world around them
- to learn from teaching and learning approaches used in other countries
- taking action to improve discipline and tackle bullying and disruptive behaviour

“Build on the foundations of CfE but provide more support in funding and staffing. Attract good staff, and retain them. Provide them with the resources they need to enrich the curriculum and stop the pressure and main focus on exam grades.” – Parent

“Flexible curriculum that is less focused on qualifications. [Curriculum for Excellence’s Broad General Education] is written to be flexible and allow for skills-based learning but then the Senior Phase is still driven by traditional exams, knowledge, content, etc. This is not joined up thinking and needs to be changed.” – Teacher

“Teachers who have the time to teach in a reasonable class size with a FULL complement of staff in school.” – Parent

“Genuine parity of esteem. A proper curriculum map for the country so we have a range of different qualifications (academic and vocational) that young people need” – Anonymous teacher group

The overarching theme of working with and listening to parents and families was raised at Q2 in the context of collaborating with families at all stages. This included: giving parents choice over school placements; involving parents in both and extra-curricular activities; making sure parents are aware of what is being taught in class so this can be supported at home, including educating parents on learning strategies they may not have used themselves; and regular communication and feedback on pupils’ progress and to gain an understanding of their needs.

Focusing on early years education, including multiple calls for a later start to formal education at age 6 or 7 and for the introduction of a kindergarten stage, was also mentioned by some. A small number made a specific call at Q2 for more staff and for more support, training and funding in early years education, and for greater recognition of early years education as a profession.

Some participants criticised the management of education policy and the politicisation of education. These participants called for government to prioritise education, for greater clarity about the roles and influence of local and central government and education bodies over setting policy and strategy, for less focus on league tables, and less bureaucracy.

The value of engaging and collaborating with businesses, employers and tertiary education was mentioned by a few participants at Q2. They highlighted how these external stakeholders could help make learning relevant to existing or future jobs,

for example workplace skills in IT, leadership or innovation. Others suggested partnering with schools to offer careers advice, work experience or apprenticeships for young people, or have experts educate pupils about life skills e.g. someone from a bank talking about money.

Less commonly mentioned themes

Several additional themes were each raised by a small proportion of participants at Q2. However, these all aligned with the overarching themes described in the main report

Differences by sub-group

The most striking sub-group difference in responses to Q2 was that teaching staff were far more likely than parents and learners to raise a variety of issues related to the profession. While a call for more funding was the most prevalent theme among teachers, they were more likely to call for greater numbers of teachers, better pay and working conditions and more ASN support. They were also more likely to raise the importance of early years education and pastoral care and wellbeing.

Comments about specific subjects and curriculum content was the most prevalent theme among parents and learners, with both raising this theme more than teaching staff. Learners were also notably less likely to mention the need for flexible learning pathways.

Other differences in responses to Q2 included:

- the most prevalent theme among organisational responses was for more funding and investment, with organisations also more likely than individuals to call for better provision of technology in schools and for more partnership working with business, employers and further and higher education
- men were less likely than women to call for more teaching staff, and more likely to make general comments on the structure of the curriculum
- ethnic minority participants were more likely than other groups to mention the need for trips and extra-curricular activities

Appendix E: Q3. How can every child and young person's individual needs be supported and addressed in the future?

Overview of responses

Question three was answered by over nine in ten participants. While the question generated comments on many themes, much attention was devoted to two key areas - how best to support those with Additional Support Needs (ASN), and how to understand the needs of each individual young person and tailor their education accordingly.

Additional Support Needs and Inclusion

Most common across responses to Q3 were comments on the policy of inclusion and the requirements of children and young people with ASN in mainstream schools, although this was typically less prevalent in group discussions. As well as the need for more ASN support, participants highlighted the need for assessment and early intervention, and the challenge of ensuring that inclusion works for all children.

The most prevalent theme at Q3 was the need for more, better and specialised support for ASN pupils. Participants called for greater understanding of, and training in, the range of needs. They also requested more support, delivered through staff or adaptations to teaching styles or teaching environments, for pupils with disabilities or long-term conditions, for neurodiverse young people with autism or ADHD, or pupils with dyslexia or other learning difficulties.

“Well funded schools, adequate and even perhaps more than adequate funding of ASN provision. Greater assessment of neurodivergence and learning styles and critically followed up teaching of strategies to enable maximum potential” – Parent group

“I think it's difficult to take care of everyone's needs, but providing them with what THEY say they need, as long as it's within reason, is good enough, for example laptops for typing, someone to read things to them etc.” - Learner

Implementing a better way of assessing a child's needs was mentioned by some, who suggested children should be regularly assessed from a young age to ensure any additional support needs are identified or diagnosed. These participants felt this approach would allow early intervention and create better outcomes, with any adaptations to or support for learning being implemented as soon as possible.

“Ensure robust health and development screening is in place and consistently used to enable rather than label children and young people.”
– Education Practitioner

While several participants suggested ways to make inclusion work effectively, some raised concerns about inclusion, usually expressing one of two arguments. Inclusion was viewed, by some, as failing those with ASN as it does not provide sufficient additional support for full integration into mainstream settings and successful learning. Conversely, some felt the social and behavioural needs of those with ASN can negatively impact other children. They suggested that learning for children without ASN can be hindered if teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time supporting those with ASN or, in some cases, dealing with disruptive or dangerous behaviour. Some participants made calls specifically for alternative provision for pupils with ASN. This included specialised ASN units within mainstream settings, or separate specialised schools which are better equipped and staffed to meet support needs.

Education tailored to the individual

Other recurring themes across responses to Q3 centred on how education can best take account of and respond to each young person's needs.

Most frequently mentioned was the overarching theme of focusing on the individual needs of each young person. This means understanding their passions and interests and tailoring choices around these, letting them develop at their own pace, and tailoring teaching and learning to their strengths and weaknesses. A small proportion specifically suggested creating or using personalised learning and support plans for each pupil.

Also mentioned by several participants was involving and listening to young people through open discussions, empowering them to make their views heard and enabling them to contribute to decision-making. This was raised more frequently in group discussions where it was one of two main prevalent themes.

The overarching theme of offering flexible learning pathways was mentioned by some participants. Comments under this theme included that varied pathways would ensure secondary education in particular offers not only a range of subject choices, but a mix of academic, practical, and vocational options and associated qualifications which are all equally valued. More specifically, a few participants provided detail on how work-based learning should be incorporated into the curriculum, through programmes such as Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), partnerships with further education and options for apprenticeships.

Some participants specifically highlighted the value of building and maintaining positive pupil / teacher relationships. These participants argued that having consistent teaching staff creates a sense of stability and allows teachers and pupils to get to know each other and form trusting relationships. A few suggested mentoring could also be useful.

A recurring theme related to ensuring education works for all children. These participants acknowledged that while some learners need additional support, this should not be to the detriment of high achievers or those in the middle. Having options which allow academic pupils to excel, as well as challenging and stretching all pupils, was considered important. A very small proportion suggested children

should be grouped or streamed in class according to ability or needs to allow for tailored and targeted teaching.

“Assessing each child as an individual and not as a whole, focusing on helping their passions and best skills grow rather than forcing them to succeed at things they struggle most with.” – Parent

“It is impossible to build strong relationships with every student in the current system. And I strongly feel this is what students need for ALL to be successful in Scottish Education.” – Teacher

Other recurring themes

Prevalent overarching themes mentioned by several participants at Q3 included:

- a need for more teachers and smaller class sizes, more pupil support staff and specialist teachers
- working with parents and families; participants noted the need for two-way communication between home and school so that teaching staff are aware of and understand the needs of a young person, that parents are aware of what is being taught and progress being made, and that schools listen to any concerns raised by families about their child
- calls for more resources and funding, often specifying the additional investment required to implement the changes and additional support outlined in this section
- for more and better staff training, which in this instance included multiple calls for greater awareness, understanding and training about neurodiversity

The value of pastoral care and wellbeing was raised by some participants. However, this was one of two main themes in group discussions. Improvements to teaching staff pay and working conditions, and empowering teachers, were also mentioned by some.

Some participants highlighted that schools were not, and should not, be solely responsible for meeting all a young person’s needs and stressed the importance of collaborating with external stakeholders and of safeguarding young people. Relevant stakeholders included social work, Health and Social Care Partnerships, GPs health visitors and NHS services, CLD (Community Learning and Development) workers, and support services such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). A few participants noted the value of partnerships between education, the youth work sector and the third sector.

Less commonly mentioned themes

On the overarching theme of investing in modern school buildings, learning spaces, facilities and equipment, comments in the context of Q3 included calls from a few participants for both larger and smaller spaces, quiet spaces and more comfortable spaces, accessible green space and play areas, and adaptations for disabilities such as ramps. A few also called for smaller schools, fewer ‘super schools’ and

fewer open-plan schools, with open-plan classrooms noted as a particular challenge for deaf young people.

Other overarching themes mentioned by a small proportion of participants included: moving away from exams, testing and a focus on grades to a greater emphasis on continuous observation and assessment; a need for greater discipline and action to tackle bullying and disruptive behaviour; specific comments about providing support for mental health and wellbeing, including calls for appropriate quiet and safe spaces and for access to professionals such as counsellors and Educational Psychologists; and comments covering multiple aspects of equity and inclusion as outlined in the main report.

“Some young people spoke about schools not feeling like safe spaces. This included classrooms and the lack of other areas where they could use. There were also comments from young people who felt unable to approach teachers for support. Some young people recognised the competing demands on teachers’ time. Others related this to the approaches, knowledge, skills and attitudes they said they needed from those who support learning. Young people suggested that more support could be provided for teachers to understand how to identify and best support young people. Examples were given around mental health, ASN, LGBTQI young people, racism, ESL and bullying.” - Young people participating in youth work across Scotland

Themes mentioned by a very small proportion of participants at Q3 included: negative comments which either described the difficulty of meeting individual needs or stated that it is an impossible aim to achieve; adopting a trauma-informed approaches across the sector; ensuring the needs of those with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are catered for; and a few comments which highlighted the need for strong school leadership to embed a safe, caring ethos and to support staff and pupils.

Differences by sub-group

Several clear differences were apparent by sub-group in response to how every young person’s individual needs can be met, especially among the three key audiences. Among parents, the most mentioned theme was working more with parents and families. The most common theme among learners was to listen to children and young people’s views and involve them in decision making. Learners were less likely than parents or teaching staff to comment on staffing levels or funding.

Calls for more teachers and for more ASN support were raised by many teachers, making these the most prevalent theme for this group. As well as being far more likely than learners or parents to raise these issues, they more frequently highlighted the challenges of making inclusion work in practice and were more likely to request more pupil support staff, funding, improved pay and conditions and better training for teaching staff. This cohort was also more likely to comment on the need to focus on the individual, to collaborate with external stakeholders and for

mental health support but were notably less likely than learners to mention listening to children.

Other differences by sub-group included:

- organisations were more likely than individuals to mention: listening to children, mental health support, working in partnership with external stakeholders and taking action to reduce and financial barriers to education
- focusing on individual needs was the most prevalent theme among participants with a disability or long-term condition, with this group more likely to raise this theme than all other groups
- male participants were far less likely than female participants to raise themes related to staffing levels and for more ASN support, and were also less likely to feel there was a need to work with parents and families

Group Discussion Q8. Did your group talk about anything else relevant to the future of equity in education?

Q8 was another optional question in the group discussion guide which could be asked at the facilitator's discretion; around one third of groups responded to the question. Comments spanned a wide range of themes; most prevalent were the need for more resources and funding in education, calls for more specialist ASN support and the need for wider action to be taken to tackle poverty.

Other themes mentioned by at least some groups included calls for: more staff training on how to best understand and support young people's needs, disability awareness, inclusive practice, and achieving equity; more teachers and smaller class sizes; a focus on the needs of each individual young person; pastoral care and wellbeing; and for consistent distribution of funding and support across local authorities.

"We need to genuinely value diversity of learning – connecting, collaborating, and valuing everyone. Communication and a shared voice to try to influence. There needs to be a movement away from working in silos. There is a huge social problem that is the elephant in the room. Schools can't do things alone and in isolation. By discussing proposed provision with all stakeholders and diligent monitoring of the impact of any changes made." - Scottish Universities Inclusion Group

"Don't be dismissive of parents, we need to be included as have knowledge and ideas about how to get the best from our children." This point was echoed by other parents with a general feeling of being completely cut out and ignored." – Lead Scotland (parents group)

Appendix F: Q4. What is one thing that needs to stay and why?

Overview of responses

Just under nine in ten participants answered Q4, with many citing more than one aspect of the Scottish education system which they felt should stay. Several themes were evident in responses, including many of the overarching themes identified across all consultation questions, with no clear consensus about what should stay.

Literacy and numeracy

The most prevalent theme across responses was for a sustained focus on literacy and numeracy. Reading, writing, spelling and maths were described by several participants as fundamental for learners' success, both during and after formal education, as they are key to communicating and understanding. Related to this, a small proportion advocated for keeping access to libraries, physical books and paper-based activities to support literacy.

"I think that Maths and English being a compulsory subject should stay. They are standard subjects that help with life and give opportunity as well, but also having the flexibility to choose subjects of your choice, young people will perform better in subjects they enjoy and feel comfortable in." – Learner

"The basics must stay. Each child must be supported to learn to read/write, do maths effectively. These are skills we all need in life and I feel should remain a focus" - Parent

Recurring overarching themes

A continuation of assessments and exams, and keeping a qualifications structure, was the second most common theme, mentioned by some. Comments covered the need for: assessments to monitor pupils' progress; external moderation of assessments to maintain standards; having qualifications which employers and tertiary education know and trust; and to have academic options available for those who want them.

Some participants advocated for physical activity to stay, given the importance of sport and fitness to wellbeing. Comments included keeping PE as compulsory within the timetable; a small number highlighted the need for outside space and play equipment. Maintaining a focus on pastoral care and wellbeing was also requested by some. This was raised more in the group discussions, where it was the most prevalent theme.

"Core PE needs to stay because if it doesn't the people that don't like sport won't do enough exercise, then they would become unfit." – Learner

“A great deal of compassion and consideration for the emotional needs of the children is ingrained within the curriculum. It would be great if this stayed.” – Teacher

“I think the most important things is Guidance Teachers/Pupil Support Workers because they listen to what you are struggling or concerned about.” - Learner

Less commonly mentioned themes

The enthusiasm, passion, dedication and commitment exhibited by teaching staff in Scotland was highlighted by a small proportion of participants, who suggested that more is required to maintain enthusiasm and encourage them to stay in the profession. Suggested methods to encourage staff retention included offering more permanent contracts. Within calls to reduce staff turnover, the need to ensure that pupils experience consistent teaching staff was highlighted.

In a few comments which alluded to the pandemic, the importance of continued face-to-face teaching was stressed. Learning in school was noted as critical for the development of social skills and building a sense of connection and community. This theme was also more prevalent in group discussions.

Most of the themes identified in a small proportion of responses to ‘what should stay?’ were also evident in responses to other consultation questions (overarching themes). These stressed the need to keep, from most to least mentioned:

- learning through play and a play-based curriculum
- skilled, well trained, qualified and experienced teachers to maintain high standards of education; within this, participants advocated for improved workforce entry training, then ongoing staff training
- a few suggested that nothing about Scottish education should stay and that everything needs to be improved
- CfE, and its four capacities; these were valued as positive foundations for education, providing structure, and offering flexibility and autonomy for teachers
- free, high quality school meals
- breaks, lunches, the five day week (and half day Fridays in some local authorities), the 6 hour school day, the structure of the day into approximately hour long periods, and study leave and holidays
- calls for more teachers, pupil support staff and increased specialist ASN support
- a broad curriculum, with participants advocating both the continuation of Broad General Education (BGE) to the end of S3, and the opportunities for subject choice later in secondary education; a preference for a broad education was also more frequently expressed in group discussions, where this was the second most prevalent theme

- a focus on mental health awareness and resources
- empowered teachers
- outdoor learning opportunities

“Building relationships needs to stay... most people’s favourite subject in school is linked to teachers they had good relationships with.” – Parent

“Passionate teachers! We need to find a way to ensure they feel valued and stay. Focus on the important things and allow them autonomy.” - Individual

Other themes mentioned by a very small proportion of participants more specifically in relation to ‘what should stay?’ included:

- a focus on early years education, with the value of ‘Realising the Ambition’ being highlighted by participants as worth retaining; few also noted a preference for the ability to defer entry to P1 to remain
- requests to maintain Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)
- the benefit of the routine and structure that school gives young people
- keeping education free for all, including nursery places and university education
- Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), which was felt to have worked well in practice as a way to focus on the needs of individual young people; focusing on individual needs was also more prevalent in group discussions
- continued support for faith schools, private schools and home-schooling options
- a positive ethos in schools and school values, reflecting kindness and respect
- school uniforms
- freedom and choice for young people; this was mostly mentioned by learners and focused on pupils being given the freedom to go to the toilet during lessons, leaving the school at lunch and being allowed phones in school, for example.
- interdisciplinary learning
- a preference for one head teacher per school, rather than shared head teachers
- external oversight and accountability, which was raised in a few group discussions

Differences by sub-group

Differences by sub-group were most evident among learners and teachers, with little variation in the prevalence of themes among other demographic groups.

Among learners, school schedules and timetables were the most mentioned issue. As noted above, this included a desire to keep breaks and play time, the current length of the school day, study leave and holidays. The second most mentioned thing learners would like to keep was physical activities and PE, followed by literacy and numeracy. Learners were also more likely than parents or teachers to mention keeping exams, particularly prelims given their value in helping learners prepare for end-of-year exams; specific subjects; better provision of technology in schools; opportunities for extra-curricular activities and trips; and more freedom of choice, as noted above.

Teachers were more likely than other groups to discuss specific features of the education system, such as pastoral care and wellbeing, dedicated teachers, play-based learning, teacher training and standards, CfE and funding. Literacy and numeracy was also the most commonly identified theme in responses from among parents, and they were more likely to make broad assertions that everything needs to be improved.

The only other difference of note was that male participants were more likely than other groups to raise the importance of assessment and exams and a broad curriculum.

Appendix G: Q5. What are the most important priorities for a future Scottish education system?

Overview of responses

Nine in ten participants answered Q5, and a wide range of themes were evident. Most of the priorities identified by participants aligned with overarching themes in responses to the National Discussion, particularly those described in the appendices presenting analysis of responses to Q1: what is needed in the future? and Q2: how do we make that a reality?

The priorities shared in response to Q5 are listed below to provide a clear understanding of their prevalence. However, to avoid repetition with the main report and earlier appendices, the discussion below elaborates on specific points or themes which feature less prominently in this report.

Curriculum review and subject-specific suggestions

The most prevalent theme in responses to Q5 was the curriculum. However, as at Q2: how do we make this a reality? a variety of strands of comments about the curriculum were expressed. From most to least prevalent, these included:

- prioritising skills-based learning, covering life skills, practical skills and hands-on learning, and skills for life-long learning
- the importance of focusing on literacy and numeracy
- multiple suggestions of subjects or curriculum areas which should be prioritised, with no clear consensus; arts, STEM including computer sciences, languages including Gaelic, history, home economics, and environmental issues and sustainability were repeatedly mentioned, and there were comments for and against the inclusion of Religious and Moral Education (RME) and sex education
- comments around the need to improve, reform or change the curriculum, making it less cluttered, easier to follow and more realistic to cover
- support for CfE and the Four Capacities, and for a curriculum which provides breadth of learning as part of the BGE phase and then a depth of learning through specialising in the senior years of high school

Comments about life skills and skills-based learning were the second most common theme in group discussions, with this and subject-specific comments more prevalent in groups.

“I think that the most important priorities are making pupils certain of how the world works and also how they get assessed.” – Learner

“To try and add more life skills and other courses that will benefit us in the future, and try to make students more independent.” - Learner

Prevalent overarching themes

Several participants stated that the education system should aim to produce well-rounded young people with the skills and confidence to be the best they can be and contribute to society. Participants felt that, as well as celebrating success, schools should be able to help young people to have a growth mindset and be comfortable with failure.

A need for more investment, funding and resources for education to prioritise the various actions outlined in this section was mentioned by several participants; this was also common in group discussions. Several also called for more teachers, pupil support staff, specialist teachers and smaller classes.

While many questions generated a small number of general comments about equity, equality and inclusion in education, a range of points were raised related to these issues at Q5. These included having: continued access to free education, at all levels, for all young people; for the system to support all young people and give them the opportunity to learn and succeed, and to have the funding and staff to support this; equity in the support given to all schools, regardless of whether they are in deprived or affluent areas, or urban, rural or island areas; equitable provision of technology and digital learning options in schools; consistency, collaboration and shared resources across local authorities; and equal standing and resources with education systems in other parts of the UK. A few noted the need to remove any financial barriers to education and to reduce the cost of the school day. A small proportion made calls to tackle and close the poverty related attainment gap.

“Too many young people feel the education system is stacked against them. Knock-on effect is that they feel society is against them too.” – Teacher

“To give children an education, not just on history, maths etc. but in generosity, responsibility, honesty etc.” – Learner

“Happy, confident young people with a genuine interest to learn who can survive in the world of work as they have been given a variety of skills and experience that will support them.” – Parent

“To provide an education system that can give all children the same opportunities and chances to shine by taking their individual needs into account. You can't only judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree when the fish is a better swimmer than a monkey.” – Parent

“Developing the person. The 4 competencies are key aims. Giving young people a range of experiences. A focus on soft skills and relationships could improve outcomes and attainment. There is absolutely a need for education developing and evidencing the academic. But there is great value in rounding the person with skills for life.” - Teacher

Other recurring themes

Some participants provided a mix of comments about assessing school standards and inspections. Most of these comments were broad calls to ensure high standards are maintained in Scottish schools. However, others advocated less focus on targets and that children should not be treated as data, with others calling for more rigorous inspection, particularly of failing schools of those needing extra support. A few called for reform of HM Inspectorate for Education, to focus more on supporting schools and having more practitioner representation.

All other recurring priorities raised by at least some participants at Q5 echoed the overarching themes described in Chapter 2 or earlier in this chapter. These included:

- improving teacher training, standards, recruitment and retention
- having a flexible, and education system which keeps pace with changes to society, helps children understand world problems like climate change and which equips them with the skills needed for the modern world, particularly using technology
- prioritising more, better, and more specialised ASN support
- comments about mental health and wellbeing; this theme was notably less prevalent in group discussions
- getting young people ready for work, work-based learning and vocational positive destinations was more prominent at Q5 than other questions, and was common in group discussions
- improving teaching staff pay and working conditions
- taking action to improve discipline and tackle bullying and disruptive behaviour
- having flexible learning pathways and work-based learning
- ensuring there are clear, effective and flexible learning pathways and settings with academic, practical, and vocational options
- for the education system to create creative and critical thinkers with a love of learning and a curiosity to explore, debate and challenge the world around them
- prioritising PE and physical activity given their importance to health and wellbeing
- empowering teachers and school and listen to the voice of teaching staff
- prioritising early years education, including introducing a kindergarten stage
- working with parents, families and external stakeholders to support young people
- focusing on the needs of each individual young person
- varied comments on the need to change the structure and format of assessment

“A system that is fit for purpose and is agile enough to adapt to the changing needs of what education people need going forward. Take IT skills for example - for me this a core subject and should be taught to everyone all way through - but isn't the case - it needs to be selected in third year - yet RME is considered core.” – Parent

“Increasing the age at which children start formal teaching of literacy to avoid failure by age 6.” – Education Practitioner

“To lessen the number of initiatives being introduced to schools. There are too many 'important' priorities and all of these are being pushed onto the class teacher to implement, without given time to learn or discuss.” – Teacher

Less commonly mentioned themes

Almost all other priorities reflected overarching themes, except for a few themes which were each mentioned by a small number of participants at Q5.

A few noted the value of learning from education systems in other countries and making it a priority to keep pace with education and attainment in the rest of the world. This would ensure Scotland's young people to have the skills and knowledge to compete globally for jobs or successfully continue their learning journey abroad.

There were calls to ensure young people have safe and appropriate learning environments. As well as ensuring school does not create any stress or harm and that facilities should be well-maintained, participants described the need for safe, relaxing, supportive spaces, and a few calls for quiet spaces and for mobile phones to be banned.

Comments about a rights-based education, prioritising and embedding the rights and needs of young people, including comments about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and support for maintaining a focus on GIRFEC were also made by a few participants.

“We live in a time when people communicate with those across the world. But we are slipping behind academically. Our rights education is fantastic but those from other parts of the world will, if we are not careful, take the jobs especially in STEM. They are way ahead.” – Parent

“GIRFEC and ensuring that all children feel safe in their learning environment.” – Teacher

Priorities mentioned by a very small proportion of participants at Q5 included calls to let teachers teach, and that schools should not be responsible for childcare or solely responsible for young people's health care and social care.

The need for better, stronger leadership across all levels of education was also raised. This included: clear and consistent policy from Government and education bodies which supports and prioritises education; taking time to implement any new

system to make sure it is credible and achievable; ensuring there is clarity around the expectations of a new system; and effective management in individual schools.

A small number made negative comments the role of politicians, stressing education should not be politicised, should be free from meddling by politicians and that reform should be evidence-based and not driven by political ideologies.

Differences by sub-group

Many sub-group differences were evident in responses to Q5, particularly between learners and teaching staff.

The most prevalent theme among learners was assessment and qualifications, and they were typically less likely than parents or teaching staff to mention most other priorities, particularly comments about the curriculum or flexible learning pathways. They were, however, slightly more likely to mention positive relationships with teachers, free school meals, facilities, and the need to reduce stress and pressure on young people.

“Focusing less on a large examination at the end of the year, and instead having assessments throughout the year which can closely examine different aspects of subjects.” – Learner

“Helping to maintain children’s mental health as having all exams during spring causes a lot of stress and pressure.” - Learner

For parents, the most important priority was to create confident and well-rounded young people, followed by comments on exams and qualifications and a range of comments on equity and inclusion.

“Helping to grow a generation of caring, humble, fulfilled people who will help to create a better world.” - Parent

Most common among teaching staff was the call for more funding, with this audience more likely than parents or learners to call for more teachers, better working conditions and more teacher training. They were also more likely to prioritise the importance of early years education.

Other notable differences by sub-group included:

- organisations were more likely than individuals to raise several priorities, including: funding; working with parents; listening to children’s voices; adapting education to the modern world; exams, assessment and qualifications; and the need for flexible learning pathways and work-based learning and vocational opportunities
- participants with disabilities and long-term conditions were more likely than those without to mention a need for more ASN support, but less likely to mention the need to adapt to the modern world and to create well-rounded young people

- those from ethnic minorities were less likely than the overall sample to mention funding, skills-based learning and working with parents, but were more likely to make suggestions about specific subjects and to note the need for Scotland's education and qualifications to compete and be recognised globally
- men were more likely than women to prioritise assessment and qualifications, but were less likely to mention funding, pastoral care, outdoor learning and the value of early years education

Appendix H: Q6. How can we ensure that everyone involved in education in Scotland has a say in future decisions and actions?

Overview

Over four fifths of participants answered Q6. Responses typically fell into three strands: who should be listened to and engaged with, how to engage with different groups, and more general comments. Other themes included trust or transparency, and accessibility, including support for participation in decision-making processes.

Who should be listened to

Asking questions and listening to key audiences was most prevalent theme in responses to Q6. Stakeholders to involve, from most to least commonly mentioned are listed below.

School staff were mentioned by many. Comments typically referenced teachers, on the basis as that those working at the front line would be best placed to make informed decisions about education. Other staff, including learning assistants, early years staff, and office and janitorial staff were also mentioned by some as being able to provide a holistic view of what might be needed in a school.

Young people and pupils were the second most cited group to engage with. As well as simply talking to and listening to learners, suggestions for how this could be done included through apps and digital communication, or pupil councils.

Many argued that parent's and families' views should be gathered and considered, for example through parent councils. Within these comments, a small proportion called for better communication between schools and parents, such as providing more information about what children are learning in school, using apps or digital communication between parents and teachers, or via regular parent's evenings. Better communication with parents was also more prevalent in the group discussions.

Broad comments such as 'ask and listen' or 'everyone' were shared by several participants without specifying which groups would be more relevant to engage.

Some called for other stakeholders to be consulted. This included stakeholders in the sector, including further and higher education, trade unions and education agencies, and those outside the sector such as local communities, employers and youth work. Participants suggested wider consultation would bring schools a better understanding of what skills young people might need for the next stage of their lives. A few called for more collaboration and partnership working between education and wider stakeholders.

Assertions that decisions should not be made by those who do not have experience of the classroom, most notably senior school management or the Government, were made by some participants. Similarly, a very small proportion advocated for engaging from the bottom up, to ensure those with less power, such as unpromoted teachers, have their say.

In group discussions, asking and listening to young people was the most prevalent theme, followed by speaking to parents. While group participants were more likely than those in the main sample to focus on young people's views and the need to consult other stakeholders, they were less likely to mention speaking to school staff.

“Make more opportunities for pupils to say their opinions and have more say in running the overall school.” – Learner

“Have it so that students can voice their opinions without being scared of being told off or not being heard. Listen to the students. They know better than you do. If a lot of students say x is wrong, get rid of x. Nothing in school is irreplaceable and students should be able to influence how they learn.” - Learner

“Speak with the pupils, really listen to what they have to say. Speak with parents, staff, wider partners of the school. What do universities want to see? What does the wider workforce want to see?” – Teacher

“Speak to them? Ask teachers actually on the frontline, feedback from parents, from children. Not middle managers.” – Parent

“Encourage feedback. Get involved with those doing the actual daily job and listen to the suggestions. Actively listen. Decisions cannot be made at a high level, far removed from those on the ground, without properly consulting those they will affect.” - Parent

How to ask

The second most prevalent strand of comments centred on how to enable people to have their say. Surveys and questionnaires were suggested by many participants, with support for an approach like the National Discussion. Several participants recommended using face-to-face channels. These included discussion groups, meetings, events, conferences, and establishing working groups.

Other suggested approaches from most to least commonly mentioned included:

- through schools, for example by contacting schools directly or asking schools to engage young people, parents and staff
- using digital channels such as websites, social media and text messages and apps
- visiting education settings in person to observe and speak to stakeholders
- making use of polls and voting in schools to make decisions

- undertaking wider consultation exercises to listen to as broad a range of stakeholders as possible

Some participants made broad recommendations such as ‘a wide range of channels should be used’. Some did not specify which channels to use; others proposed alternative suggestions such as quizzes, newsletters, or working through creative artists, which did not align with the more prevalent themes identified.

A very small proportion of participants gave examples of ways in which specific audiences could be reached. For example, engaging with teachers through trade unions or the General Teaching Council for Scotland, with parents through external agencies, and with young people through youth work.

Listen and act

More generally, several participants highlighted the need to truly listen to feedback, act on it, and communicate what change has been implemented as a result. The value of engaging with stakeholders early in the process was also noted to ensure participation is seen as meaningful rather than tokenistic.

“Consultation is important, but people need to feel listened to. Schools, councils, governments have to respond to the concerns of parents and children.” - Parent

Support and accessibility

Numerous suggestions were shared by some participants about how to make engagement accessible and inclusive. These included: using a range of formats, including non-digital methods for those who do not have access to technology; making any engagement events or surveys easy to find and accessible to all, for example having meetings for parents outside of working hours and tailoring engagement for different audiences; giving people enough time to participate and express their views; and supporting seldom heard or minority groups to participate. Finally, there were calls to support those who may be less likely to engage, for example those who lack confidence in expressing their views, those who are disengaged from education or those with English as an additional language.

Regular listening

Some participants called for engagement and listening exercises to take place frequently, regularly, or continuously. There were also suggestions for follow-up activities and ongoing reviews to be undertaken once a change has been implemented, to identify if further adaptations are required.

Trust and transparency

Some participants advocated for open, transparent and non-judgemental feedback processes. A few explained that these processes should enable people to contribute anonymously. Some recounted previous experiences of not being listened to, or of pre-determined agendas or decisions being implemented contrary

to people's views. A few noted a need to ensure that discussion is not dominated by those who shout the loudest.

“Ensure that future plans for education are not a fait accompli; make sure that the suggestions made by the wider community are actually part of that plan.” – Teacher

Less commonly mentioned themes

The need to promote or advertise any engagement activity was noted by some participants. They emphasised the importance of ensuring all relevant stakeholders are aware of any feedback opportunity, so everyone's views are noted.

Some participants left more negative comments, questioning whether it is possible to truly involve everyone, or advisable to involve those who do not have an informed opinion.

A variety of comments were made by a small number about the role of local authorities. These included: for local authorities to do more to listen to those in education and act on feedback, such as holding forums or having representatives at meetings to facilitate discussions; a few questioned the competency of local authorities to run education or felt that they should not be able to force their agenda onto schools. Some felt local authorities should work more closely together to share best practice and promote consistency across Scotland; within this strand of comments there was also an understanding that different local contexts may apply.

Equality considerations were also raised, including young people's rights to have their say, the importance of speaking to those in marginalised communities, involving those who are disengaged with education and holding engagement events outside the central belt.

“Talk to the people for whom education has not achieved the intended results e.g. people who can't find employment, people who have spent time in the prison system. What do they feel was missing?” – Parent

“Working with different groups, policy-makers and deliverers can consult groups such as ethnic minority mothers, EAL parents/carers, kinship carers, young carers to ensure they are consulted in suitable ways.” - Licketyspit Theatre & Play Company

Differences by sub-group

The most striking difference in views, when analysed by category of participant, was that young people, parents and teachers were each far more likely to feel that they should be listened to over other groups.

For learners, listening to young people was the most prevalent theme, followed by listen to everyone; only a small proportion suggested that parents and teachers should be asked. Building trust and acting on feedback was notably less important for learners.

Among parents, listening to parents was the most common theme, but this group were the main source of comments about the need to improve communication with parents.

Teachers most commonly highlighted that they should be listened to but were also more likely than other groups to note the importance of speaking to other school staff and to other stakeholders. Feeling that comments were being listened to and acted on was the second most common theme among this audience.

Other differences by sub-group included:

- organisations were more likely to highlight the need to ask, listen to and work in partnership with other stakeholders and external agencies
- male participants were typically less likely to say children, parents or teachers should be listened to, and were more likely to make general negative comments
- while a small sample, LGBTI+ participants were more likely to think children, teachers and other stakeholders should be asked, and much more likely to state that people outside the classroom should not be consulted

Appendix I: Q7. How can children and young people be cared for and supported in the future? (i.e. physical and mental wellbeing)

While comments about health, wellbeing and pastoral care were evident at all consultation questions, this chapter presents an analysis of Q7 which focused on wellbeing and asked how children and young people can be cared for and supported. Group Discussion Q9 also asked about wellbeing; analysis of this question is incorporated below.

Overview of responses

Nine in ten consultation participants answered Q7. These responses spanned physical and mental wellbeing, but there was a greater focus in comments on what more could be done to improve young people's mental wellbeing.

Pastoral care and wellbeing

Several comments at Q7 fell into the overarching theme of more and better pastoral care and wellbeing. These included calls for pastoral care staff and teams, and positive relationships with Guidance teachers to support wellbeing, including regular check-ins with young people. Comments on these areas were more prevalent in group discussions, where this was the most prevalent theme. While nurture was mentioned across several questions, this strand of discussion was particularly prevalent at Q7. Participants advocated for whole-school approaches to nurture, nurture bases and nurture groups, to ensure schools are a safe, caring and compassionate environment.

Another theme mentioned by several participants was focusing on health and wellbeing as a priority, and for it to continue to be regarded as one of the key areas of CfE. A few noted this aligns with children's rights, the UNCRC, and GIRFEC.

“Guidance teachers asking pupils personally once a month, face to face, so that they can feel open and honest about how they are feeling.” – Learner

“Maybe sure each child can say they have a trusted adult within their educational premises that they feel they can open up to without being judged or dismissed.” – Learner

“Emotion Works, more nurture time, more time in the day for health and well-being, more PSAs for the children to build a relationship with.” - Teacher

Access to school-based mental health support

The second most prevalent theme was a for more funding and better access to specialist or professional mental health support in schools. Participants raised several options for this, including: mental health nurses; counsellors and therapists; education psychologists; mental health first aiders or ambassadors; support groups; and support hubs with trained and dedicated staff. This was also the second most common theme in group discussions.

“More support for people with mental health issues and not blaming it on 'puberty' or being a 'teen'. More experienced counsellors.” – Learner

“We will need more support workers and support services in the school for people who are struggling.” - Learner

Physical health and education

Focusing on physical health was the next most common theme, mentioned by several participants. Some concentrated on the importance of PE lessons and suggested they should be mandatory or updated to include a wider range of activities. Other comments on fitness were more general, with broad points about the need to encourage physical activity, Active Schools activities and active travel. Across these comments, the importance of physical activity to health, wellbeing and social engagement were noted.

Two related themes, each mentioned by a very small proportion of participants, were the need for more specialist PE teachers, and for better sports facilities in schools. The latter included: gyms and changing facilities, more PE equipment, playgrounds and outdoor spaces, outdoor fitness equipment, and all-weather pitches.

“More encouragement to take part in physical exercise whether it be the normal curricular choices and/or a more mindful practice such as yoga.” – Teacher

Funding

The need for more funding, investment and resources was a recurring theme, with most calling for increased funding to implement the actions suggested in this chapter.

Working with parents and families

A range of suggestions were made by several participants about how schools could work with families to improve young people’s wellbeing. These included: better links and more communication between parents and school, including listening to any concerns parents raise about their children; encouraging positive parenting and offering parenting education workshops and classes, particularly for those who are struggling due to poverty, ill health or lack confidence in their parenting skills; teaching parents how to support mental health at home; and being able to have open and honest conversations with parents.

However, some participants stressed that a young person's health and wellbeing should not just be seen as the school or teacher's responsibility; most felt parents should be either solely or at least partly responsible.

Staff training and guidance

In the context of health and wellbeing, calls for more or better staff training took many forms. These included: greater awareness and understanding of disabilities, neurodiversity and dyslexia; being able to identify mental health or behavioural issues early and use preventative approaches; training in trauma-informed approaches; being more able to make young people feel at ease, comfortable and willing to share their feelings; ensuring equal focus on both physical and mental health; and more training in outdoor learning.

Recurring themes

Teaching young people strategies to manage mental health was raised by some participants. Suggestions included tools for resilience, managing stress and emotional regulation such as Zones of Regulation, mindfulness and meditation. Participants also highlighted the importance of encouraging open conversations about mental health to reduce stigma, and not lecturing young people about mental health. This theme was also more prevalent in group discussions.

“Pupils think they should have more learning on how to manage emotions.” - Fox Covert Primary School P7B (Children and young people group)

“There needs to be more teaching on mental health. It's brought up as a topic and then quickly dropped. All subjects need to teach it better, especially PSE.” - Learner

In addition to in-school support for mental health, a recurring theme was to ensure better access to external or specialist mental health services, especially CAMHS. These comments included calls for additional resources to reduce waiting times.

Some also stressed the need to ensure there is sufficient access to other external agencies and support. This included: social work and preventative social care, NHS health services, family support workers, community support workers, youth workers and the third sector. A strand of comments within this called for better partnership working with other external agencies, including calls for them to be included as part of the school community or by offering a hub-style provision. Examples of joined-up approaches included action to remove barriers to referrals, better communication, effective child protection and child planning meetings, increase accountability and sharing of good practice. Accessing health services was also raised, with participants noting the value of school visits by medical professionals such as school nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists. There were also calls from a small proportion of participants for promotion of NHS support services and for more investment in health promotion and prevention approaches.

Another theme was providing appropriate safe and nurturing spaces within the school environment. Participants described many forms including safe spaces, wellbeing hubs or nurture units, and adaptations such as being allowed to use headphones in class to address sensory needs. There was more emphasis on these varied learning environments in group discussions, where this was the third most frequently mentioned theme.

“Ensure there is space for everything that is needed, example a 'nurture room.” One parent gave an example of how a teacher made the decision to cut their office in half so the space could be used for a nurture room after a new school building hadn't made space for one in new plans.” – Lead Scotland (Parents group)

The overarching themes of the need for more teachers, the value of outdoor learning opportunities and of free and better school meals were also recurring themes at Q7.

Less commonly mentioned themes

The importance of asking and listening to children was noted by a small proportion of participants. They suggested children should be asked how they are, and time should be available to listen to them, their needs and opinions in a respectful, non-judgemental way.

A few participants raised the importance of teaching young people social skills and emotional literacy. This could include communication, building positive relationships and friendships, and understanding values of kindness, empathy, trust and respect.

How curriculum could support health and wellbeing was mentioned by a few participants. This included building wellbeing into subjects and topics including arts and music, ensuring curriculum is broad and flexible, including life skills and skills for work such as leadership, team activities and problem solving.

A small number argued the stress and pressure experienced by young people needs to be reduced. Their suggestions included: reducing the number of tests and exams; having more preparation for exams; reducing the focus on academic attainment; not rushing children through learning; reducing or removing homework; and making after school schedules less busy. Helping young people with internet safety was mentioned by a few participants who felt education should discourage excessive use of technology and social and increase understanding of the potential harms of social media.

Introducing health and wellbeing in early years or primary education was also seen as valuable. This involves teaching children about health and wellbeing, and helping them to develop movement, balance and motor skills. Participants suggested this approach could aid early intervention and minimise the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Themes specific to Q7, each raised by a very small proportion of participants, included:

- suggestions for more breaks and rest time, fewer class changes, more soft starts, dedicated wellbeing days, and less stigma being attached to missing school
- a specific strand of comments on the need to tackle bullying and cyber bullying
- calls for raising awareness of, and better signposting to, mental health support, including ways to get support confidentially
- concerns about disruption to learning due to the pandemic and school strikes
- disagreement with the focus on mental health, suggesting that the system is 'too soft', 'pandering' to mental health, that children are being labelled and medicalised, and that schools should focus on teaching
- the value of early intervention and offering timely support
- using mentors, buddy systems or volunteers in school to help support wellbeing
- calls for health promotion and education around risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol, drugs, sexual health and relationships
- greater use of therapy pets, which was mostly suggested by learners

Differences by sub-group

Among learners the most prevalent themes were general comments around pastoral care and wellbeing, physical education, access to mental health support in school and being taught mental health tools and strategies. This group were notably more likely to mention the need for an appropriate and safe learning environment. Parent's views typically aligned with the overall sample, with the value of physical education being their most frequently mentioned theme.

Teachers most commonly mentioned better staff training and guidance, followed by access to in-school support. Other themes frequently raised by teachers more than other groups included working with parents and families, funding, access to external mental health support, and the need for more partnership working with other agencies.

Other sub-group differences included:

- participants with a disability or long-term condition were more likely to call for a greater focus on each young persons' individual needs
- men were less likely to suggest greater access to mental health support in school

Appendix J: Q8. How can the right of every child and young person to have opportunities to develop their full potential be achieved in future?

Overview of responses

Over four fifths of participants answered Q8. The vast majority of the themes evident in responses to this question were aligned with the overarching themes across the consultation, particularly the importance of flexible learning pathways, listening to young people and focusing on individual children and young people.

Prevalent overarching themes

The most prevalent themes in Q8 were all overarching themes described in the main report. The two most frequently raised themes, both mentioned by several participants, were calls for more teachers and smaller class sizes, and for more funding and investment to action the suggestions made at this question and throughout the consultation.

Other recurring themes each mentioned by some participants at Q8 were:

- offering flexible and inclusive learning pathways and a range of options and opportunities for young people depending on their needs, ability and interest.
- listening to the voices of children and young people by giving them opportunities to share their opinions and having a role in decision-making
- the importance of treating every young person as an individual, focusing on their needs, abilities and interests, and tailoring their education accordingly
- general comments about pastoral care and wellbeing, and how education should provide positive relationships and a nurturing, supportive environment
- more specialist support for those with additional support needs who are in mainstream schools, including teacher training on understanding additional support needs and calls for regular assessment to enable diagnosis and allow interventions or adaptations to be put into place early
- more and better staff training, ensuring that skilled, experienced, high quality teachers are available to all, and that teachers are passionate, creative and able to inspire their pupils

Comments on the curriculum were made by some, and typically fell into two strands. More generally, there were calls for a broad and varied curriculum to be offered in schools, particularly in relation to ensuring a wide range of relevant subjects or courses are accessible in secondary school to ensure that everyone's interests are catered for. The other strand of comments focused on developing a well-designed curriculum, informed by future skills needs, with useful subjects.

While some focused on literacy, numeracy and other traditional subjects, others suggested courses on global issues, health and wellbeing, expressive arts, practical skills, technology and coding. There were also calls from some participants for more work-based learning and vocational options.

Some participants highlighted the importance of working with families and listening to parents. Participants noted that understanding a young person involves getting to know their family and listening to any thoughts or concerns about their child's needs. Others stressed the need to offer support to families, and parents' responsibilities to support their children to fulfil their potential.

The need for greater flexibility in teaching methods was highlighted by some, who requested adaptations to ensure children are taught and learn in ways that suits them. In addition to different types of learner pathways outlined above, this might include play-based learning, child-led learning, more creative approaches to teaching, extra-curricular activities, and more trips and out-of-classroom learning. Some of these options may also require flexibility in the curriculum. There were also calls for offering a variety of teaching methods to allow neurodiverse children to learn in their preferred way.

“Making the education system work for everyone, not having it just about academic success with spelling and maths but about being a good problem solver, or kind and helpful, or good with people.” - Learner

“By acknowledging not everyone is learning by sitting at a desk. Teach in other ways and environments. Reach the young people.” – Parent

“The teachers are already working with pupils to bring out their best however students might need to be exposed to a different style of learning with either more practical or written elements” - Learner

“More control about what you study and the pace you do it at - there is nothing wrong with doing a course over 2 years. Career appointments and college courses embedded earlier.” - Learner

“Stop trying to force group-think conveyor belt education on them and provide practical opportunities looking to future trades and careers.” – Parent

Less commonly mentioned themes

Building young people's confidence through offering encouragement and recognising achievement was suggested by a few participants, who felt young people should be encouraged to ask for help, try new experiences, and share their views. They suggested that hard work by young people should be recognised and that all forms of success should be celebrated and valued, to boost self-esteem and self-worth.

“Educating children in subjects like English and maths is incredibly important but so too are fun activities. My daughter has had days with

Spors Na Gaelic and massively benefited from activities like paddle boarding and climbing. It's boosted her confidence and helped give her a 'can do' attitude. These types of activities should be in all schools.” – in the Parent

Ensuring that children are aware of and educated about their rights, including their right to have opportunities to develop their potential, was also mentioned by a small proportion of participants. They argued that as well as being aware of their rights, young people should also be made aware of, and willing to accept, the responsibilities that come with them.

“The first part of Article 29 says the aim of education is: ‘(a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential’. It is very much expressed in the present tense whereas this question sets it in the future tense. We need to stop speaking about developing talents in the future and recognise that the right within article 29 has to be realised now.” - Aberdeen for a Fairer World (Montgomery Development Education Centre)

Another theme was improving young people’s understanding of what opportunities are available. This included greater knowledge of further and higher education options, but also careers advice, types of jobs and self-employment. Participants described the importance of evidencing these opportunities through work experience, taster sessions at colleges or university, and partnerships between schools and employers, for example.

“Giving pupils contacts with workers in the jobs that they are interested in so that they can get first hand feedback of how they got to where they are and what it is like in the job.” – Learner

“I think that pupils should be able to have lessons on different jobs, so they know what they want to aim for.” - Learner

Other themes mentioned by a few participants at Q8 included: calls for more pupil support staff; to act on discipline, challenging behaviour and bullying; increasing opportunities through the wider policy agenda such as tackling poverty and working with other agencies; and improving the pay and working conditions of teaching staff.

All other themes mentioned by a very small proportion of those answering Q8 are described in the main report, except for:

- mixed reflections on the role of private and Catholic schools, including calls to abolish private schools, for state schools should have the same level of teaching as private schools, and the need to maintain commitments to Catholic education
- criticism of focusing on children’s rights

Differences by sub-group

Only a few notable differences in views about how children should be supported to develop their full potential were evident by sub-group. The most prevalent theme among learners was to listen to and involve children, followed by improving their understanding of future education and career options. Listening to young people was also the most frequently mentioned theme among parents, and this audience were more likely than learners or teaching staff to call for a focus on individual needs.

The need for more teachers and for more funding and resources were the most common themes among teaching staff, with both themes mentioned more by this group than by learners or parents. Teachers were notably less likely than learners or parents to mention the need to listen to young people.

Other differences included that participants with disabilities or long-term conditions were more likely than other groups to cite the need for flexible learning pathways, and ethnic minority participants were more likely to call for fewer exams and less testing.

Group Discussion Q10. Did your group talk about anything else relevant to the future of rights in education?

Just under one third of groups responded to Q10, which was another question in the guide for group discussions which could be asked at the facilitator's discretion. Though many points were raised, comments largely fell into four core themes.

Ensuring that children are aware of and educated about their rights was most mentioned at this question, compared to being a less commonly mentioned theme at Q8. Groups also noted the importance of making young people aware of the responsibilities that come with exercising their rights.

The other three main themes at Q10 were:

- having a variety of flexible learning pathways, as frequently noted at Q8
- brief comments about ensuring a rights-based education aligned with the UNCRC
- the importance of asking children and young people and listening to their views

“The school is currently progressing through the RRS [Rights Respecting School] journey and pupils are becoming more rights aware. They are keen to raise awareness of pupil rights and also action these in school.” – Anonymous children and young people group

“Developing an understanding of their role in protecting the rights of others within the understanding of own rights.” – Anonymous group

“Every child has rights but also they must learn responsibility (consequences to negative actions).” Anonymous parents group

“Weaving UNCRC through all curriculum areas. Global Goals focused teaching.” – Anonymous teachers group

“We like to be asked what’s important.” - Barrhill Primary School (children and young people group)

Appendix K: Q9. How can children and young people be helped to learn about our changing world, so they feel able to positively contribute?

Overview of responses

Three quarters of participants answered Q9. As this was one of the more specific questions in the Discussion, responses were often more focused than at other questions.

Teach it as part of the curriculum

The most common theme, raised by several participants, was for topics of relevance to the changing world to be incorporated into the curriculum. In this strand of discussion, participants suggested that topical themes could be put into context in all subjects and taught in a positive, relevant, engaging way. This was also the most prevalent theme in group discussions, with a few groups noting the value of interdisciplinary learning.

Some participants mentioned how topical issues could be integrated within specific subjects. Modern Studies was frequently mentioned with some calling for this to be compulsory or treated as a core subject; other social subjects such as history, geography and RME were also mentioned, as was PSE. On balance there was support for learning other languages, but some mixed views were identified. There were also suggestions for more teaching about politics, citizenship, sustainability and the environment. Others, however, suggested that wider learning should be built into all subjects, for example reading non-Scottish texts in English lessons to understand world views, or researching and writing essays about topical issues.

A very small proportion of participants stressed the importance of learning from history to help frame current issues and future action. This included calls to de-colonise the curriculum and reflect on Scotland's colonial history and its impact on society.

“Give more periods a week to leave space for actual current events. Make it more visible in the curriculum too.” – Learner

“Have subjects similar to Modern Studies that teach what is going on in the world and spark up conversations about what could be done to change it.” – Learner

“By having a class once a week called Geostudies where they learn about the earth and the world and how to stop climate change.” – Learner

Provide information and knowledge

Several participants suggested that children and young people should have opportunities to increase their knowledge about the world. This included time to do their own research, watch the news or other programmes about current affairs, and read articles in newspapers or online about topical issues.

“More general news in assemblies so that children can learn more about what’s going on in the news and how they can help.” - Learner

Develop a sense of responsibility and citizenship

Another common theme was helping young people to understand their place in the world and develop a sense of responsibility and citizenship. There were multiple aspects to this. Most common was helping young people understand they can be agents of change. Some participants suggested this could be done by showing them examples of how they can contribute and of positive impact and positive change, in particular where the actions of young people have had an impact.

Another theme, mentioned by some, was empowering young people to act and express their views, building confidence and resilience through offering opportunities to take part in activities, encouraging and inspiring them to participate, and developing leadership skills.

Other strands of comments under this theme included ensuring young people are taught about politics and how decisions are made, and are encouraged to participate in political discussions, forums, action groups, pupil parliaments and writing to MPs/MSPs. Developing an understanding of citizenship through adults acting as role models for young people and leading by example was also noted.

Specific environmental suggestions

Some participants suggested various topics and actions related to the environment and climate change which they felt should be encouraged. These included recycling, re-use, sustainability, gardening and food production, and energy conservation. This theme was the second most mentioned in group discussions.

“Activities to get involved with such as creating more green spaces in the school or putting recycling to good use.” - Learner

Work with local community and wider society

Encouraging and providing opportunities for young people to engage with their community was mentioned by some. Examples included offering young people routes to participate in community activities such as volunteering, local development projects, litter picking, local charity projects and fundraising, and visits to care homes.

Open discussion

The importance of talking openly about relevant issues was also highlighted. Participants called for sufficient time to be set aside for child-led discussion and debate about topics of interest. Others noted the need for discussion to enable young people to develop debating skills and be able to listen to and assess a range of views on a topic.

“By having open conversations, by sharing what is going on with children. Often they are far more able to handle Information and understand big issues than we give credit for.” - Teacher

Listen to young people and their interests

Some participants reiterated the need to listen to young people and understand what matters to them. This included comments about asking questions to explore their passions and interests, allowing them to ask questions and express their views, and to support them in decision-making.

“Don’t hide anything, allow children to express themselves, be heard and the most important, listened to.” - Parent

Creative and critical thinkers

The overarching theme of developing critical thinkers was mentioned by some participants, stressing the importance of young people having a curiosity and ability to undertake their own research and investigation, form and debate their own opinions, challenge the world around them, and to assess the accuracy of media, social media and fake news.

Other ways of learning

Several other ways of learning about the changing world were each mentioned by some participants. One strand of comments focused on the need for active and experiential learning. Some stated that young people should have hands-on and real life experiences but did not elaborate on what this might involve, while others made various suggestions for out-of-classroom learning. These included trips to museums, places of worship, places of work, different communities and natural environments, and encouraging travel and learning about other cultures through foreign exchanges.

Using outside agencies and guest experts to speak on issues in school was also mentioned. These could include scientists, representatives of different cultures and faiths, third sector organisations, emergency services, and people with lived experience. Attending relevant events or conferences was also described as an option.

Other suggestions included: for schools or young people to participate in workshops, competitions, and mentoring programmes; gamification; group and project work; trialling ideas; using resources from relevant organisations; and assemblies on specific topics.

Sensitivity and honesty

Ensuring discussions about topical issues are handled sensitively and age appropriately was mentioned by some. There was concern that young people should not be made to feel anxious or worried about the world's challenges, or to feel under pressure or responsible for fixing them. Conversely, a very small proportion noted the importance of being honest with children and telling them the truth about how the world is changing.

Less commonly mentioned themes

Multiple themes were raised by a few participants at Q9.

The role of parents and families was mentioned in the context of learning about the world. Some participants felt this was the sole responsibility of parents; others felt that parents should be supported to feel empowered to have relevant conversations with children and have real-world experiences outside school. Others felt parents should be open to hearing young people's views and could be included in learning as they may have their own experiences to share or prejudices to dispel.

Comments on training and standards centred on ensuring that teachers have sufficient real-world experience, are trained in and knowledgeable about world issues and current affairs and have guidance about how to discuss sensitive subjects with pupils. Suggested topics for training included: sustainability, social media and LGBTI+ issues. There were also calls for time to be set aside for training through CPD or sabbaticals.

Partnering with employers and local businesses to have guest speakers in school, giving young people real life examples of potential future careers, was another less common theme. There were also calls for more work-based learning, programmes such as DYW, work experience opportunities and careers advice to help young people understand the skills and attitude needed for work and the jobs they might like to do. An additional point raised in the group discussions related to the changing world of work, and the need to build young people's resilience and adaptability from a young age as people no longer have a job for life and change job or career more frequently.

Other themes mentioned by a few participants included: improving digital skills and confidence; comments that children are already being helped to learn about the changing world, in a sensible, appropriate way; teaching life skills, especially financial education; ensuring young people develop an understanding of others and learn from their lived experience, and show empathy, kindness and respect; and the value of outdoor learning.

Themes raised by a small proportion of participants at Q9 included:

- having greater exposure to other cultures as part of learning
- comments that teaching about a changing world should not be a priority, should only happen once the fundamentals of learning are established, and that children should not be taught political ideologies

- the importance of focusing on children’s rights and rights-based approaches; a few specifically highlighted UNICEF’s Rights Respecting Schools Award
- calls for more collaboration between schools, not only to share resources but to have school exchanges so pupils can have different experiences
- learning about charities and getting involved in fundraising activities and events
- challenges around equity and access, specifically ensuring those from marginalised or disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to express their views, and that discussions do not prioritise the loudest voices or high achievers

Group discussions

While the above themes were evident in the group discussions, more emphasis was given to: teaching life skills, developing skills for work and work experience; working in the wider community; out-of-classroom learning; and listening to young people and their interests.

“More educational trips to see how what we are learning fits in with life - shops, banks, sports centres, restaurants, etc.” - Baljaffray Primary School (Children and young people group)

“Links with DYW (outside agencies)... Experience the world (trips) and different communities... Building in skills that will be beneficial in the future.” – Buckie High School (Teachers group)

Differences by sub-group

Only a few sub-group differences were evident at Q9. Among learners, the most common theme was to be given opportunities to gain information and knowledge; learners were also more likely to raise this theme than parents or teachers. Teaching topical issues as part of the curriculum was the second most frequently mentioned theme among learners, and the most mentioned among parents and teachers. Young people, however, were less likely than parents or learners to say that listening to the child is important.

Parent’s views were broadly in line with the overall sample, except that they were slightly more likely to mention tackling topical issues sensitively than either learners or teachers. As well as being less likely to mention opportunities to provide information, teachers were more likely to suggest links with employers and local businesses.

Other sub-group differences included:

- organisations were more likely than individuals to: highlight the value of extra-curricular activities and trips; recommend that topical issues should be part of the curriculum; call for helping young people develop a sense of responsibility and citizenship; and to make specific environmental suggestions

- minority ethnic participants were more likely than other groups to call for education to create critical and creative thinkers, to empower young people to express their views and to learn from the past
- the small number of LGBTI+ participants were more likely to call for the views of young people to be listened to, and for topical issues to be treated sensitively

Appendix L: Q10. Do you have any other comments that you would like to provide about a vision for the future of Scottish Education?

At the end of their survey or discussion, all participants were asked if they had any other comments to add about a vision for Scottish Education. This chapter summarises the analysis of responses to these questions.

Overview of responses

Just over three fifths of participants left a comment at Q10. The broad scope of the question resulted in a huge range of themes being raised, with no one theme dominating the discussion. Points related to the overarching themes were raised or reiterated by many participants. However, a few additional themes arose, often with a more negative sentiment than seen at other questions.

Prevalent overarching themes

Most of the commonly mentioned themes at Q10 reflected the Discussion's overarching themes. For brevity we have not described these in detail as they have already been covered earlier in the main report.

The most prevalent theme at Q10, in both the survey responses and group discussions, was a call for more investment, funding and resources for education. This was requested by some participants, as was the second most common theme of improving the pay and working conditions of teaching staff.

Other overarching themes reiterated by a small proportion of participants at Q10, included:

- having more teachers, smaller class sizes, and more classroom support
- providing more and better ASN support
- ensuring teaching staff are high quality, well trained and experienced, and that good teachers are retained
- the importance of early years education and support for a kindergarten stage
- focusing on each young person's needs
- asking and listening to teachers and school staff, and visiting education settings to understand the reality of working in the sector
- working with, communicating with, and supporting parents and families
- flexible learning pathways
- streamlining, reforming or replacing CfE

- tackling disruptive behaviour, bullying and enforcing greater discipline

Negative comments about Scottish Education

Some participants shared negative comments about Scottish education;. These typically voiced concern that the Scottish education system has significantly deteriorated, and that falling standards and attainment is failing young people.

“A vision would be helpful because we used to have one of the best systems in the world and in the last 15 years we have completely destroyed it, which is very sad to see.” – Parent

“I just hope that these comments will be listened to as it is quite depressing to be both a parent and a teacher at the present time because we constantly feel that we are not listened to, but we know that if it continues like this the future will be very bleak indeed.” – Individual

“We are at breaking point with the current financial and staffing situation. I worry that we are so stripped back in schools that it is becoming unsafe for our young people.” – Teacher

“The Scottish Education system was once of the best in the world until academic success and cost cutting became the main priorities for schools. For us to continue to live in the world we have just now with all of the privileges we have, we must encourage young people to aspire to various different vocations.” - Teacher

A few commented specifically on perceived failures in education policy, the politicisation of education and poor-quality decision-making in central and local government.

“The quality of education in Scotland is failing our children. Please get it back on track. As a devolved area of government, the responsibility rests with Scottish Government. It doesn't look like success at this point.” – Individual

“The people in charge of Scottish Education at all levels should be experienced in the day to day life of a school. Too often decisions are made by people who appear to have never set foot in a school from the day that they left.” – Teacher

“It needs drastic action and I do not believe the current government are capable of supplying it. I also though, do not believe there is another political party in Scotland that can either. Radical overhaul is required on every level.” - Parent

Less commonly mentioned themes

All other themes raised at Q10 were each mentioned by a very small proportion of participants, and most reflect those outlined in the main report. Themes raised particularly in relation to Q10 included:

- for policy makers, in considering the future of education in Scotland, to aim high and be bold, radical, innovative and ambitious; a few participants noted that there are examples of effective schools which others could learn from
- positive reflections such as education is generally working well or highlighting the strengths of teaching staff
- participants offering thanks for being asked and able to participate in the National Discussion
- calls to lessen the bureaucracy, measurement, outcomes, benchmarks and tick-box exercises in the sector
- a small number of comments both for and against private and faith schools
- criticism of the National Discussion, focusing mostly on the questions being asked and the short timescales available to give feedback
- calls to ensure there is effective oversight and evaluation of any changes implemented
- to take time think through and plan any changes, and for change and implementation to be well managed
- on the topic of workforce development, calls to ensure that there are enough jobs available for newly qualified teachers and more permanent contracts
- to get 'back to basics' and focus on textbooks, discipline and academic grounding

“Be bold and creative. More of the same, with the same people steering the ship, would be the worst possible outcome. We need a different ship, a new captain, a new crew.” – Parent

“Just please be brave enough to make some big changes!” – School support staff

“Yes - please be brave and make changes, it might not be popular initially but remember the longer-term goals. Don't base changes on political popularity - do what is right for families and young people.” – Individual

“A Scottish education is one of the best in the world. No matter whether you wish to be a political leader, a mechanic, an artist or a professional sportsperson, our education system is able to support & nurture determination, perseverance & hard work.” - Parent

“There was a word of caution by some stakeholders not to ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater’ and ensure we have capacity in the system (especially the workforce) before any systemic change.” – East Renfrewshire Council

“Whatever the vision is, and whatever the outcomes then are, they need to be given a solid period of time to embed and develop - it feels like there has been so much change over the last 10 years in the educational

setting, that schools and teachers are always being asked to react and adopt new and unfamiliar practices, creating upheaval for all involved, and preventing a baseline being accurately established.” – Education Practitioner

“Please don’t replace the existing system until you have a FULLY operational replacement system that is covered with a thorough curriculum, textbooks and teaching aids.” - Parent

Differences by sub-group

Given the prevalence of overarching themes at Q10, many of the sub-group differences evident at this question repeat those already highlighted at other questions.

The most prevalent themes in comments from learners were around scheduling of the school day, and about the need for mental health wellbeing and support. Both themes were more frequently mentioned by this group than by parents or teaching staff.

Commenting on the negative state of education was the most common theme among parents. This, calls to work with parents, and calls for more ASN support, were mentioned more by parents than learners or teachers.

Reiterating concerns about teaching staff pay and conditions was most prevalent among teachers. This group were more likely than learners or parents to mention: the need for more teachers and support staff, the importance of early years, teacher training and standards and for more funding for education.

Other differences by sub-group included:

- male participants being more likely to give negative comments on the failure of government and policy around education
- LGBTI+ participants were more likely to mention mental wellbeing and support
- participants from ethnic minorities were more likely to express concern at Q10 about progressive education and social issues