Call for Written Evidence on the Scottish Government Draft Budget 2015/16

We are very pleased that the Scottish Government has given a reassurance on teacher numbers for 2015/16 however there are several areas where the lack of support surrounding a teacher’s role impacts hugely on his/her ability to concentrate fully on the learning and teaching of young people. There is nowhere else to cut staff or resource budgets within schools or in education centrally in order to maintain a healthy and safe working environment for all involved or to deliver the improvements to which we all aspire.

The areas in which we have particular concern are:

1. lack of supply, particularly subject-specific supply to cover classes during absence;
2. problems caused by the expectation to release teachers for developmental, SQA activities and CPD due to lack of supply;
3. pressure on school budgets resulting in problems in resourcing new courses (esp. Higher);
4. insufficient time to allow staff to carry out activities expected by SMT/local authorities/SQA. The Working Time Agreements in schools don’t have sufficient time available to let all these things happen.
5. lack of exemplars of good timetabling models to move from 2+2+2 to 3+3. Training/debate on this would be helpful for SMT/HTs;
6. Schools are presently presenting new Higher for the first time and beginning planning for Advanced Higher, or will be introducing new Higher and Advanced Higher next year. An additional development day (on top of the one already promised) would be welcomed. There were 2 last year, for N4 and N5, but this year is new Higher, the Gold Standard with high accountability.
7. The reduction in support staff in schools, i.e. admin and pupil support, is having a detrimental knock-on effect on teaching. For example, Faculty Heads are now expected to check off their departmental orders. Where does this come in the list of priorities when considering pupil referrals, organising cover classes etc? Also, due to the lack of First Aiders in school because of redundancy of learning assistants the only First Aider left in school is a teacher who is pulled out of class several times a day to administer First Aid.
8. The reduction in pupil support staff in particular is having the effect of increasing tension in the classroom leading to more violent incidents as behavioural needs pupils are not sufficiently supported.
9. The reduction in head office staff, especially QIOs and HR mean that investigations, absence management, discipline and grievance procedures are taking much longer than agreed which has a stressful effect on all concerned as problems are not rectified in a reasonable timescale.