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Stewart Maxwell MSP  
Convener  
Education and Culture Committee  
T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
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Ur faidhle/Your ref  
Ar faidhle/Our ref:

29 May 2015

Dear Convener

**EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) BILL: REGISTRATION OF TEACHERS IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

At the Committee's evidence session on 28 April on the Education (Scotland) Bill I agreed to provide you with further information on our plans to require that all teaching staff working in independent schools are registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

In order to give you as accurate a picture as possible, we have done some further analysis of the information available to us. As you will see below this has resulted in some changes to the figures we discussed at Committee, but overall the position remains the same – that there is a relatively small number of teachers in independent schools who will need to gain additional qualifications in order to register with the GTCS.

Based on this further analysis, it is our understanding that approximately **645** staff are currently employed as teachers in independent schools and are not registered with the GTCS. Following discussion with GTCS, this figure excludes other staff who are identified as working in classroom roles but who are not identified as being teachers, such as learning support staff. These individuals will not require registration. This explains the variation between 645 teachers and the figure of around 730 teachers I quoted to the Committee. Of course, turnover within the workforce means this figure may change again. However, we are assuming that any further fluctuation will be minimal.

Of these 645 teachers, it is our understanding that around **265** already hold the qualifications needed to meet the current GTCS registration criteria. A further **115** are music teachers, many of whom are instrumental instructors and we know that the GTCS are currently considering whether those instructors should be able and/or required to be registered with the GTCS in the future. It is our expectation that this issue will be resolved in advance of commencement and we are assuming that all these individuals will secure registration.

I realise that this is not quite the picture I painted at Committee when I indicated that around 500 staff could gain registration immediately with GTCS and that the remainder would need some time. The figure which I gave of around 230 individuals needing time to gain registration was accurate nonetheless – although it has now been slightly revised to around 265 given the more up to date figures available.

The Scottish Government understands that these 265 individuals hold a range of qualifications, many at degree level. Others qualifications include, for example, Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), National Vocational Qualifications, and Scottish Vocational Qualifications. Some teachers are simply listed as holding “other qualifications” or “professional qualifications” which is likely to include some who have an overseas qualification.

The Government recognises the importance of supporting the independent sector and, in particular, the existing workforce in the transition towards registration. Discussions are currently being undertaken with the GTCS and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools regarding the specific arrangements which may need to be put in place – this will include the length of the transitional period. Our current thinking is that this should commence in 2017/18 and last 2 years, ie all teaching staff would need to be GTCS registered by August 2019.

It is recognised that the change being proposed will lead to some of the existing workforce needing to secure further qualifications and sufficient time and support mechanisms will be made available to achieve this. Similarly, we are keen to explore whether specific arrangements may perhaps need to be put in place to support, for example, particular schools who could face challenges around GTCS registration as a result of the curriculum they deliver. Of course, it will be important to maintain the necessary rigour around the registration process and we are committed to exploring how best this can be achieved.

Nevertheless, we are optimistic that the arrangements being put in place will minimise the impact of this policy on the sector whilst at the same time delivering the clear benefits which are associated with GTCS registration.

In terms of the schools likely to be most affected by the shift towards full registration, the information we have suggests that, in general, schools with smaller rolls will be most impacted. Further, we understand that those schools who offer an alternative curriculum (such as, for example, Rudolf Steiner schools and the International School of Aberdeen) may face particular challenges. Our discussions with GTCS and SCIS will pay particular attention to transitional arrangements for these schools.

Separately, I am aware that you have requested clarity on who we consider to be a teacher for the purposes of education policy. Building on The Requirements For Teachers (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2005/355/made>) we would suggest a teacher is anybody who is employed to teach in a school and has the appropriate professional skills and knowledge necessary to enable them to undertake the teaching duties allocated to them.

I hope this information is helpful.

Your sincerely

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