



Education (Scotland) Bill 2015 – Call for Evidence

The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) is an independent education charity representing over 70 member schools in Scotland which educate around 32,000 children of mixed abilities from diverse backgrounds. SCIS promotes choice, diversity and excellence in Scottish education. SCIS welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Education and Culture Committee on the Education (Scotland) Bill 2015.

21. How would grant-aided schools, independent schools and their pupils benefit from their teaching staff being registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland? What different or new skills would such teaching staff acquire as a result of registration? Is it likely that attainment would improve in the schools in question?

The Policy Memorandum to support the Education (Scotland) Bill outlines in paragraphs 98 and 99 what are considered to be the benefits of full registration of teachers of independent schools. SCIS takes issue with the emphasis put in these paragraphs on the introduction of compulsory registration as a means of addressing poor teacher quality and the link with weakness in the provision of education. The provision of education in independent schools is of very high quality, as recognised by Education Scotland in inspection reports where 90% of independent mainstream schools to receive a full inspection since 2010 have been graded as Excellent, Very Good or Good in Learners' Experiences and Meeting Learning Needs. Pupil attainment is commendably high: the A-C pass rate in SCIS schools in 2014 was 97.2% in National 5, 95.8% in Intermediate 2, 91.6% in Higher and 92.6% in Advanced Higher.

Regardless of whether a teacher is GTCS registered, teachers in independent schools are required to go through rigorous selection procedures, are well supported in their professional development and are members of the PVG scheme as required. The inspections carried out by Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate cover safeguarding and recruitment procedures. Schools' individual appraisal systems are an established mechanism by which a Headteacher is confident about the quality of teaching in classrooms throughout the school. Professional review and development processes are well established – the Professional Review and Development (PRD) Framework first produced by the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) for schools in 2001, was revised in 2013-14 and was validated in full by GTCS in March 2014. All independent schools have validated (or soon to be validated) PRD systems in place, either based on the SCIS framework and endorsed by GTCS or their own bespoke systems individually validated by GTCS. Teachers in independent schools are supported by these PRD processes regardless of whether they are GTCS registered. Independent schools invest in the professional learning of their staff as demonstrated, for instance, through the high uptake in the wide

range of CPD provision offered by SCIS. Support for professional learning in independent schools is further demonstrated by the high number of independent school teachers involved in SQA activities through principal assessor, marker and nominee roles, and the role played by independent school teachers in the various working groups that were established to develop the new national qualifications.

Clarity should be provided that this legislation relates to teachers delivering the core curriculum within a school, and does not include other roles providing wider curricular provision, for instance sports coaches and instrumental music instructors. It would be a significant loss to the rich educational opportunities provided by independent schools if compulsory registration of teachers restricts a school's ability to enrich the curriculum through providers of other activities.

Schools in membership of SCIS do not, on the whole, take issue with the registration of teachers with GTCS as an additional way of supporting the professionalism of teachers and recognise the safeguards which membership of a regulatory body can provide, but SCIS cannot agree that making GTCS registration compulsory will incur any of the particular benefits outlined in the Policy Memorandum. Registration would not lead to the acquisition of any further skills of teachers in independent schools who are already expected to be highly skilled and who are already supported in developing new skills as required. The compulsory registration of teachers will not have an impact on the attainment of the schools in question where a strong emphasis is already put on the attainment of pupils, alongside a deep commitment to the wellbeing of pupils and their personal development.

On the other hand SCIS has significant concerns that compulsory registration will bring some disbenefits:

- In many cases the outstanding teachers in independent schools who are not registered with GTCS because their subjects, qualifications and /or experience do not meet with registration requirements and categories laid out by GTCS, are well qualified in other ways and have proved themselves to be highly competent teachers through a school's appraisal scheme. It will be a significant loss to the quality of education provision in independent schools in Scotland if restrictive registration requirements set out by GTCS prevent schools being able to employ some excellent and inspirational teachers on the grounds that they do not meet the GTCS registration requirements. In some cases these teachers already have teaching qualifications recognised elsewhere e.g. TeachFirst, Graduate Teacher Programme, University of Buckingham Independent PGCE, Schools Direct Programme (salaried route), which are not accepted by GTCS.
- The freedom of schools to recruit a diverse, multi-talented and sometimes international workforce committed to meeting the needs of all pupils both in the academic and extra-curricular life of the school and, where applicable, in the boarding life, will be restricted. The recruitment needs of these schools go well beyond teachers who fit into GTCS registration requirements and categories.
- There is a real danger that insisting on GTCS registration will have a detrimental impact on a school's ability to operate and offer the breadth, richness and flexibility of curriculum which enables them to meet the diverse needs of all pupils. Subjects are at risk where for example the subject is not part of the standard Scottish curriculum and therefore not recognised by GTCS, e.g. History

of Art; subjects within the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme e.g. native literature and language options provided for international pupils; or where there is a shortage of registered teachers e.g. Classics. The range of subjects is one of the reasons parents choose the independent school sector. If parents' choice is restricted this further brings into question the 'benefit' of GTCS registration for parents.

- Small, special schools face a particular threat. Teachers in special schools where the curriculum is tailored to meet the very individual needs of pupils and whose particular skills and attributes support their work with the young people in their care, do not necessarily fit easily into the registration categories of GTCS. The new legislation will have a significant impact on these schools, both in terms of current workforce and in future recruitment.
- Schools which offer an alternative curriculum such as the Steiner schools employ a significant number of teachers who are not eligible for GTCS registration. In the case of Steiner schools, many teachers will have undertaken Steiner teacher training qualifications.

22. What transitional arrangements would be appropriate, particularly to avoid the risk of smaller special schools being unable to operate?

A staged introduction would be essential together with a broadening of experiences and qualifications acceptable for GTCS registration. Further detailed discussions still need to take place with GTCS to bring clarity as to how they will support the registration of teachers currently employed who do not meet their requirements. The authority of Ministers to apply exceptions in respect of the current teacher workforce is critical in ensuring that the employment status of established, competent teachers is not put at risk, and therefore it is essential that achievable and proportionate options are found for teachers not currently eligible for GTCS registration.

In order to meet legislative requirements, it will be essential that GTCS adopts greater flexibility in registration arrangements. Ideally options will open up which enable an experienced, competent teacher to gain full, unrestricted registration with GTCS on the basis of evidence of their competence and fitness to teach, through testimonials and records of professional learning. In the past the Exceptional Admissions to the Register (EAR) was a means by which established teachers, who had qualified in another part of the UK or in another country and teachers without the standard certificate or diploma in teacher training could apply for registration which took a minimum number of years of well attested teaching service into consideration in lieu of a shortfall in a teaching qualification or degree content. The decision was taken by GTCS to withdraw the EAR in 2009. SCIS would encourage a review of the position on the EAR as a route to the registration of well-established teachers with well attested teaching service.

If further study is required, the practicalities, time and cost implications of this must be taken into account. For instance the Independent PGCE offered by the University of Buckingham may become one option, if recognised by GTCS in future, which enables a teacher to obtain a PGCE whilst in post. This takes one academic year to complete and costs £3995. The Assessment Only Route with the University of Buckingham costs £2490. A two year transitional period would therefore be tight,

particularly where there are several teachers in one school requiring to undertake further study with the time and cost implications and the support required. The cost of this type of course is significant for any individual to bear. Whilst some schools may contribute to the cost, this will not be the position in all schools. The cost of undertaking such courses has not been taken into account in the Financial Memorandum.

In considering appropriate transitional arrangements for the current workforce, it is important to consider the impact on future recruitment. In order to ensure teachers can still be recruited from outwith Scotland whose experience and/or teaching qualifications do not meet the requirements of GTCS, there must be a process built in which will allow the teacher to be appointed and provisionally registered, subject to achieving an appropriate qualification or demonstrating the Standard for Full Registration within a set period of time (as is the case for instance with registration with SSSC). It is equally important to consider that full GTCS registration might not be appropriate nor practicable in future recruitment in some individual cases. For instance, it would not be practicable for teachers of minority languages employed on a very part-time basis to support small numbers of international pupils in their native language, to obtain full GTCS registration.