Submission from Voice

The Committee invited views on the role of the third sector and the private sector in improving attainment and achievement for all school pupils, particularly those whose attainment is lowest. The following views are offered from Voice the Union in Scotland. They are offered in response to the questions as raised. Views were invited as follows:

1. the scale of the third and private sectors’ involvement in schools, in terms of improving attainment and achievement, and the appropriate dividing line between their role and the role of education authorities;

Voice comments – We know there are some good examples of involvement within schools but it seems quite an ad hoc picture often depending on the relationship some staff have with family and friends working in those sectors and inviting them into the school to work with the pupils. It is unclear however from a national perspective the exact scale of involvement across the country and it would therefore be helpful if this could be established. This would help to ensure that any future national initiatives do not duplicate effective arrangements already in place within some schools. Gathering information on this would also help to enable best practice examples to then be shared more widely. The involvement of third sector organisations should complement rather than overlap with the role of education authority staff - third sector organisations, over whom education departments have no direct authority, cannot have responsibility in education matters. Additional requirements, such as GTCS/SSSC registration further confirm the necessity to ensure that third sector organisations do not undertake the role of education staff.

2. whether their approaches have been particularly successful in improving achievement and attainment for school pupils. If so, whether their methods could be more embedded in the curriculum;

Voice comments - Consideration requires to be given to what is meant by "attainment and achievement" and how this is to be measured. Many organisations will be achieving a positive impact upon attainment in an indirect way. For example, there are third sector organisations that help to support the development of positive relationships in schools and pupil's engagement with education as delivered by the authority, which then leads to improved outcomes for those pupils. Further embedding methods in the curriculum is less of a priority than ensuring that adequate resource is provided to fund successful initiatives and the support of sharing of good practice - to date SAGRABIS have seen many good examples of positive behaviour strategies within schools, sometimes involving third sector or private sector organisations. The work and experience of this group should also be drawn upon as part of this exercise.

3. whether the full potential of the third and private sectors in helping to improve children’s attainment and achievement is being realised;

Voice comments - Until a clear picture of current involvement across the country as a whole is established, it is not possible to answer this conclusively. It will also be
dependent upon individual school budgets - one school might be able to set aside greater funds than another to pursue a particular project involving a third/private sector organisation. Both would arguably be realising the full potential of involving third/private sector organisations within the context of their budget. Ensuring sufficient resource is available to schools to support working with third sector organisations is essential.

4. how successful schools have been in reporting on pupils’ wider achievements (i.e. not just examination results) such as those the third sector helps to deliver. Whether such achievements are valued by parents, employers and learning providers as much as formal qualifications;

**Voice comments** - Only anecdotal views from parents. In terms of value to employers, it will depend on the context and work needs to be done to raise the status of achievement beyond formal qualifications e.g. vocational education. However, concerns are also expressed by employers about the work-readiness of school leavers. It would therefore appear desirable to employers for skills as well as formal qualifications to be focused upon in school.

5. given the strong policy focus on the early years, whether the third and private sectors have been able to work equally effectively with pupils of all ages

**Voice comments** – again a difficult thing to measure both in scale and value. Some suggestion that the relevance of such involvement has more value with older children. And it is hard to say whether any involvement is effective without knowing the measure for this - the expected outcomes would presumably not be the same.

That concludes the Voice views on this theme of the exercise.

Many thanks

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Voice