Dear Dr Maxwell

The Education and Skills Committee has decided to undertake scrutiny of a number of NDPBs and Agencies prior to the publication of the Draft Scottish Government 2017/18 budget. The Committee will scrutinise the work of:

- Education Scotland;
- Scottish Qualifications Authority;
- Skills Development Scotland; and
- Scottish Funding Council.

The focus of the scrutiny will be how these bodies deliver the outcomes expected of them by the Scottish Government, how their strategic direction reflects the Christie Principles and their contribution to the Scottish Government’s climate change targets. This approach is in line with recommendations of the Finance Committee guidance to all subject committees and follows on from the work of the Education and Culture Committee last year.

It is likely that the Committee will seek the attendance of Education Scotland at a Committee meeting in November to explore these issues. In advance, the Committee would be grateful if you would provide a written statement and there are a number of issues the Committee would like specific commentary on, which are outlined below. The Committee will also be seeking views from a number of stakeholders on the performance and strategy of Education Scotland prior to the evidence session taking place.

The Committee notes that Education Scotland sets out its strategic goals on its website and how these goals maps onto the National Outcomes. Other bodies (e.g. SDS and the SFC) receive ministerial letters which set out the outcomes expected of those bodies in the forthcoming financial year. I would be grateful if you could share
Education Scotland’s most recent similar ministerial (or Scottish Government) letter with the Committee as soon as possible and, in due course, describe how the outcomes expected of Education Scotland are reflected in its strategies.

The Committee would also be grateful if you could confirm how Education Scotland measures its impact on National Outcomes and National Indicators and please highlight the latest data and assessment available on Education Scotland’s impact in this regard. As part of this, it would be helpful to understand how Education Scotland quality assures its work to ensure that it is considered to be of high quality by your stakeholders and whether the quality assurance is performed internally or externally. I would also be grateful if you could identify how Education Scotland’s strategies and financial plans prioritise Education Scotland’s work to ensure that it has the greatest impact in delivering National Outcomes.

The Committee is also interested in how Education Scotland has and is taking forward its work on the basis of the four Christie Principles of reform. We would be grateful if you could point to any particular programmes or reforms that demonstrate this.

The Committee is aware that the policy landscape you work in is fluid and that there remain constraints on public sector spending. The Committee would be grateful if you could outline how Education Scotland undertakes long term financial planning and provide evidence and assurance that Education Scotland is able to manage change effectively.

Finally, the Committee is also specifically interested in how Education Scotland is contributing to the Scottish Government’s targets on climate change. The Committee would be interested to hear how Education Scotland is encouraging and enabling Scottish society to use natural resources more efficiently, as well as how Education Scotland is doing so itself.

We would be grateful for a submission covering these issues, along with any other matters in regard to the performance and financial strategy of Education Scotland you would wish to highlight, by **Friday 14 October 2016**. The Committee would be grateful for a copy of the Scottish Government letter which sets out the outcomes expected of Education Scotland in this financial year as soon as possible.

I appreciate that the Committee is seeking a large amount of information from you, and your time to attend Committee. So if there is anything you wish to discuss having read the above, please call Ned Sharratt the Assistant Clerk to the Committee on 0131 348 5204.

Yours sincerely

JAMES DORNAN MSP
CONVENER