

## From COSLA Children and Young People, and Resources Spokespersons



24<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Convenor of the Education, Children and Young People Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Via Email - [ecyp.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:ecyp.committee@parliament.scot)

Dear Ms Webber,

Thank you for your letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> March on School staffing. Please find the responses to each of the questions you have asked below.

The Scottish Government has provided this additional funding for the stated purpose of protecting the pupil teacher ratio and teacher and support staff numbers; therefore, the Committee would ask COSLA to set out the way in which the funding received to date has been used by local authorities if not for that stated purpose.

As we set out in detail in our letter of the 7<sup>th</sup> February, the Local Financial Returns (LFR) and Projected Outturn Budget Estimate (POBE) detail Local Government expenditure on school staff, and clearly shows the significant amount of council budgets spent on teachers and highlights increasing spend year on year. We also provided details on a number of vacancies for teaching posts that would not have been captured in census figures.

In our letter of 16<sup>th</sup> February, we also set out that the policy intention of each 'pot' of funding had different origins and purposes – for example £10m of this funding provided in 2015 was to protect the teacher ratio at 13.7, the teacher ratio as of 2022 is 13.2 – showing that Local Government is far exceeding the original ask.

Your letter of 7 February goes on to say that it was not agreed that the teacher census would be used to monitor Local Government's use of the £145.5m and that the Scottish Government and COSLA had agreed to jointly design a simple collection exercise. The Committee asks COSLA to provide further information on how the collection exercise would work and what data would be used. Further, the Committee asks COSLA to set out the steps it is taking to ensure that there is an agreed system for measuring the use of this funding in 2023/24. The Committee is concerned that if different datasets are being used by Scottish Government and Local Government then there will be no reliable mechanism for measuring outcomes.

We understand that the Scottish Government has committed to use the school census to measure the deployment of the £145.5m and other funding streams. Our concerns around the limitations of the school census, as set out in the previous communications, remain.

COSLA officers are in ongoing discussion with the Scottish Government officials to ascertain if we can improve the process to collect data on school staff at differing points across the year which more accurately reflect the teachers employed and required.

In evidence on 22 February, the Cabinet Secretary acknowledged there may be a need to take exceptional circumstances in some local authorities into account when considering the use of the additional funding and whether to apply penalties in relation to teacher and support staff numbers. The Committee notes that some local authorities are experiencing a decrease in school rolls, whilst others have increasing pupil rolls; some local authorities might need more classroom assistants rather than teachers. The Committee believes that there should be an element of flexibility in how the funding can be used. The Committee asks COSLA to set out how local authorities deal with such differing circumstances in deploying the additional funding.

We agree with the position set out by the Committee; indeed this is why COSLA has argued that introducing sanctions if school staff numbers are not maintained is unhelpful, and will create challenges and perverse incentives. We believe the focus should be on measuring the outcomes for children and young people, as demonstrated by our work with the Scottish Government on stretch aims for the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

As we set out in our last letter, improving attainment requires councils to draw on a wide range of local services in order to support the diverse range of needs of children and young people in our communities. We are concerned that a focus purely on the number of school staff results in very limited choices and therefore a significant impact on other vital services which have been crucial components of our collective plans to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap.

We remain of the view that the Scottish Government should pause any considerations of financial sanctions and engage with Local Government so we can protect all the vital council services that support children and young people, including ensuring that the investment in the correct school staff, based on local needs, can continue.

In the absence of a pause, there are a number of areas where we think that funding decisions will be beyond the control of individual local authorities, and therefore should be considered as exceptional circumstances. These include:

- Recruitment and retention – as recognised by the then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills when giving evidence to the committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, there are a number of challenges facing a number of local authorities in both recruitment and retention to school staff roles. This is particularly an issue for remote and rural authorities, but also for secondary schools in a number of subjects (particularly mathematics, sciences, home economics and other STEM subjects).
- Scottish Attainment Challenge – Former Challenge Authorities – changes to the distribution of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding have created pressures for

the former 'Challenge' authorities. In many cases this funding was used to employ school staff and will be impacted as funding reduces.

- Scottish Attainment Challenge – Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) - PEF is deployed by each headteacher. This may have an impact on school staff numbers across an authority if a headteacher was to change their deployment of their use of PEF funding. As an example, a head teacher could choose to procure third sector wellbeing support instead of a temporary school staff post.
- Ukraine Education Tariff - A number of Local Authorities recruited additional teachers to support children and young people who had arrive from Ukraine. The posts were funded through the UK Government's Ukraine Education Tariff, which will cease in April 2023.
- School roll – as the Committee notes, some local authorities are facing reductions in their school rolls (in some cases significant reductions). This may require the need to redesign staffing structures.

The Committee notes that the most recent [school support staff statistics](#) were published today; the Committee asks COSLA to provide comments on these statistics, in the context of the issues covered in this letter.

This publication reflects that local authorities continue to invest in school staff. We had highlighted the additional investment in school support staff in our letter on the 7<sup>th</sup> February, and highlighted that the £145.5m was flexible to be used to fund both teaching and school support staff posts.

We note that the Scottish Government has committed to developing a New Deal for Local Government, and set out in their '[Equality, opportunity, community: New leadership - A fresh start](#)' prospectus that this will to include 'a fiscal framework, enabling better collaboration to jointly deliver our shared priorities, tackle the collective challenges we face, and improve outcomes for people'. In this spirit we are looking forward to constructive discussions with the new Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on this issue.

We hope you find the response provided useful in the Education, Children and Young People Committee's consideration of this subject.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Tony Buchanan  
**Children and Young People Spokesperson**

Cllr Katie Hagmann  
**Resources Spokesperson**