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Terry Shevlin
Education and Culture Committee
Scottish Parliament



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Dear Terry,

Attached is further information for the Education and Culture Committee on the National Improvement Framework and the potential implications of the Framework for the Education (Scotland) Bill.

The draft National Improvement Framework was published alongside the Programme for Government on 1 September. It remains a work in progress and Ministers and officials are engaged in a comprehensive round of engagement and discussion events as we look to develop the draft Framework. Our intention is to provide the Committee with further information about the developing Framework prior to the proposed discussion with the Cabinet Secretary in advance of Stage 2.

In the meantime, if you or Committee members have any questions or would like additional information about the Framework then please let me know.

Best wishes,

Kit Wyeth



The National Improvement Framework

The National Improvement Framework brings together key information to evaluate performance and informs the action taken to improve attainment and wider outcomes for every child in Scotland. It sets out Ministers' vision and priorities for Scotland's children, particularly for the most disadvantaged, and the drivers of improvement which support those priorities. It builds on the best practice within Curriculum for Excellence in using a range of data and evidence to report and plan improvements for children.

It will ensure that education in Scotland is continually improving and that all children are being equipped with the skills they need to get on in the world. Most importantly, it will ensure that we are making progress in closing the gap in attainment between those in our most and least deprived areas. The Framework will promote consistency and transparency, support diversity and give room for innovation in schools.

The Framework is based on the best practice which exists internationally on the use of data and intelligence to improve education at national, local, school and individual child level. Our work has been informed by the OECD research: Synergies for Better Learning <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/synergies-for-better-learning.htm>.

Providing the support that all our children and young people need is at the heart of the Framework. To do that we need to know much more, on a consistent and systematic basis, about the performance of our education system. The National Improvement Framework will allow us to see where we are succeeding and where we need to do more. By doing that, it will help us to raise standards more quickly. To provide more consistent evidence, there will be a new national standardised assessment for children in primaries 1, 4, 7 and in S3. This will focus on aspects of literacy and numeracy, providing a diagnostic assessment of children's progress. We will also bring greater focus to improvements in the health and wellbeing of children and young people. We intend to start publishing information about children's progress at the different levels of Curriculum for Excellence in primary and lower secondary school – just as we do already for the senior years of secondary school. We will consult on the detail and format of publication to ensure that we are providing it in the appropriate context.

This will bring consistency, transparency and robustness to the work currently taking place across the country and will inform teachers' professional judgement of children's progress within Curriculum for Excellence.

Implications for the Education (Scotland) Bill 2015

Ministers propose to place the Framework on a statutory footing through a series of Stage 2 amendments to the Education (Scotland) Bill. Specifically, they propose to bring forward new statutory duties on:

- Scottish Ministers to establish and periodically review the National Improvement Framework;
- Education authorities to work towards delivering the priorities set out in the Framework; and

- Scottish Ministers and education authorities to prepare and publish reports and plans.

Benefits of placing the National Improvement Framework in law

The Framework will support all levels of the system in knowing whether the twin aims of raising attainment overall and closing the attainment gap are being met. By bringing together key information to gauge progress and inform improvement, the Framework will help us to raise standards more quickly.

Whilst Ministers recognise that this could be delivered through a non-statutory Framework, a legislative solution will significantly strengthen the levers available to drive up standards, raise attainment and enhance accountability. Specifically, a statutory Framework will deliver the following key benefits which would not otherwise be realised:

- Whilst a non-statutory Framework would facilitate a shared understanding of Ministers' expectations for education, it could not require education authorities to deliver against those expectations. Statutory duties will legally require that all education authorities work specifically to deliver against the priorities of the Framework.
- A statutory Framework will ensure a degree of consistency and consensus in the overall approach adopted by consecutive Governments, providing local authorities, other key partners and the public with clarity and confidence that robust, permanent arrangements are in place to drive improvement at all levels within the education system.
- A statutory Framework will enhance accountability by ensuring the regular preparation of local reports (submitted to Ministers and available to parents), and providing robust and consistent evidence. A non-statutory Framework could lead to variations in approach, resulting in inconsistent and incomparable information against which to measure progress.
- A statutory Framework will enhance accountability for performance reporting at national level by ensuring the regular preparation of national reports, providing Scotland-wide data and other relevant performance information. Legislation will be used to establish a defined role for the Scottish Parliament to scrutinise those reports.

Ministers intend to take the opportunity offered by Stage 2 to integrate the current proposed reporting duties at Part 1 of the Bill (inequalities of outcome) with the planning and reporting arrangements linked to the Framework.

National Improvement Framework Q&A

What is the National Improvement Framework?

The National Improvement Framework for Scottish education brings together key information to evaluate performance and informs the action taken to improve attainment and wider outcomes for every child in Scotland. It sets out our vision and priorities for Scotland's children, particularly for the most disadvantaged, and the drivers of improvement which support those priorities. It builds on the best practice within Curriculum for Excellence in using a range of data and evidence to report and plan improvements for children. The full document can be accessed via: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00484452.pdf>.

When will the National Improvement Framework be implemented?

The draft Framework was launched on 1 September to coincide with the Programme for Government. Following a period of engagement and consultation, the Framework will be published late 2015/early 2016, but will be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects the priorities of Scottish education.

What are the key priorities of the National Improvement Framework?

The Framework sets out clear priorities that everyone working in Scottish education should be clear about what they are trying to achieve. They are:

- Improvement in attainment, specifically reading, writing and numeracy;
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing;
- Improvement in sustained school leaver destinations for all young people.

How will the Framework support coherence across education?

The Framework and our key priorities will be supported by a number of drivers of improvement which are based on the recommendations of the OECD report [Synergies for Better Learning](#) when developing a national framework of this kind. We are taking a holistic approach to the drivers, promoting synergies between each component and building on much of the positive work already underway in Scottish education:

- School improvement
- School leadership
- Teacher professionalism
- Assessment of children's progress
- Parental involvement
- Performance information

Will the National Improvement Framework cover the breadth of Curriculum for Excellence?

We will phase in the Framework, developing all of the interconnected elements over time. In the first stage, the Framework will focus on the school years and the skills that underpin successful learning in all areas. From 2017 onwards, the Framework will be expanded, with a particular focus on the inclusion of measures in the early

years and which builds on the assessment and development approaches currently in use across education and health. Consideration will also be given to the work on Developing the Young Workforce and other curricular areas, as well as to the needs of Gaelic Medium Education.

What will the data from the National Improvement Framework look like?

The Framework will look at a range of existing and new evidence which will tell us how we are progressing and where support is required for improvement purposes. One source of data will be a new national standardised assessment, focusing on reading, writing and numeracy at P1, P4, P7 and S3. These are intended to replace the variety of different assessments already in use across local authorities. They should not increase teacher workload; indeed, as a Government, we are mindful of the need to reduce bureaucracy so that teachers can focus on what they do best: helping children to learn.

How will the new assessments support teachers?

The new assessments will introduce greater consistency to Curriculum for Excellence. They will provide reliable evidence of a child's progress, but they will not be the sole measurement. This is not about narrowing the curriculum or forcing teachers to teach to a test. It is not a return to the national testing of old. The assessments will inform, not replace, teacher judgment and will provide robust and consistent evidence to support teachers in judging whether a child is achieving the required level of Curriculum for Excellence.

What is the purpose of collecting the data?

This is not about creating crude league tables. Assessing and measuring attainment is not an end in itself: the purpose is to drive improvement. Parents need meaningful information about the progress of their children. Teachers need to know which pupils are doing well and which ones need more support; governments—local and national—need to have reliable data to inform policy; and all levels need to know whether the twin aims of raising attainment overall and closing the attainment gap are being met.

How will the data be presented and what information will be available to parents?

The National Improvement Framework will ensure that a range of measures and approaches are used to report progress and that no single measure is used in isolation. It is our intention that planning and reporting on implementation of the Framework at school, local authority and national level should become a legal requirement, introduced through the Education Bill. The detailed reporting arrangements are a key part of our on-going engagement with stakeholders. This change will provide parents and communities with assurance that statutory arrangements are in place for scrutinising improvement activity across the education system.

What resources are being made available for schools, teachers and families about the National Improvement Framework?

We will develop a new National Improvement Hub which will provide teachers with a rich range of tools and resources to help them raise attainment and improve performance. We will also provide clear exemplification of how a range of evidence, including the new standardised assessment, can be brought together to support

teachers in understanding children's progress. We will work with the National Parent Forum of Scotland to provide information for parents and carers about what the Framework means for them and their child and how they can better support their child's education both at home and at school.

How much will the Framework cost?

A detailed cost assessment will form part of the on-going work to develop and implement the Framework.

What engagement activity are you doing to engage with people on the development of the National Improvement Framework?

A series of engagements are planned. Ministers are keen to hear and understand the views of teachers, parents, trade unions, local authorities, academics and other stakeholders as the Framework continues to develop. Further information is available via:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/NationalImprovementFramework/Events>.