Education Scotland
Submission to the Education and Skills Committee

Contents

The Committee has asked for a submission which addresses: the proposed expanded role of Education Scotland set out in the Scottish Government’s 2017 report ‘Education Governance: Next Steps - Empowering Our Teachers, Parents and Communities to Deliver Excellence and Equity for Our Children’ (Next Steps); the performance of Education Scotland over the past year and Education Scotland’s resources in the next financial year.

In response, this submission provides an overview of the following:

1. Who we are and what we do
2. Proposed expanded role of Education Scotland
3. The performance of Education Scotland over the past year
4. Education Scotland’s resources in the next financial year
5. Conclusion.

1. Who we are and what we do

Education Scotland (ES) is the lead public body for assurance and support for education improvement in Scotland and a key partner in helping achieve the Scottish Government’s (SG) vision of excellence and equity.

We promote improvement in all sectors of education and at all stages of the learning journey, from the early years to adult and continuing education. ES is an Executive Agency which has its role defined by a Framework Document. This sets out how we operate and our relationship with Scottish Ministers and the SG, enabling us to work independently and impartially whilst remaining directly accountable to Scottish Ministers for the standards of our work.

2. Proposed expanded role of Education Scotland

Local Authorities have statutory responsibility for improvement and ES is proud to support quality and improvement in Scottish education. We are fully committed to ensuring that our activities add value and make a strong and effective contribution to building the world-leading education system our children and young people deserve.

Our unique combination of roles and capabilities blends guidance, support and constructive challenge in ways which will increase the pace of improvement across the whole of the education system.
ES’s role and functions were extended and enhanced in *Next Steps*. This set out how our inspection and improvement functions, and our ability to provide key elements of national support and challenge, would be strengthened further by:

- enhancing our inspection function
- leading national support for professional learning and leadership development
- providing improvement and curriculum support.

In September 2017 the Interim Chief Executive and Interim Chief Inspector of Education set out the initial steps ES is taking to support and drive improvement in schools through our enhanced role. Combining the increased inspections with our other improvement interventions will mean that ES will reach every school, every year.

**Enhancing our inspection function**

*Next Steps* states that ‘inspection will be a crucial tool that supports the system-wide goal to continuously improve’, and the proposals include a strengthening of our inspection function to provide key elements of national support and challenge.

ES already carries out inspections and reviews across sectors ranging from early learning and childcare to adult learning. To support improvement in Scottish education further we will:

- significantly increase school inspection, moving from 180 to 250 schools per year initially
- set out and publish our annual programme of inspection activity across different sectors of education
- develop a single approach to inspection of early learning and childcare with the Care Inspectorate, contributing to 1,800 inspections per year as we support the expansion of care and learning for the youngest children in Scotland
- introduce a programme of ‘young inspectors’. Young people will work with HM Inspectors and support and drive improvement in learning
- undertake inspections of the attainment-related aspects of the education functions of nine local authorities over the coming year
- extend our team of associate assessors for schools to include aspiring headteachers
- use the findings of inspection to strengthen further the content of our leadership and professional learning programmes.

We will publish a new *Standards and Evaluation Framework* which will set out the way in which inspection supports improvement; our approaches to inspection and more detail about the focus and frequency of school inspections.
National support for professional learning and leadership development

*Next Steps* states that ES will have a renewed focus on professional learning and leadership, providing clarity and coherence to the national landscape.

Integration of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) with ES is now well underway and will be completed by 1 April 2018. All ten SCEL leadership programmes will transfer and continuity of delivery will be maintained for those practitioners involved. Senior SCEL staff have already been involved in discussions about how the combined organisations will deliver our revised remit effectively.

Together we will develop leadership programmes that help current and future leaders improve the quality of education. In particular, we will grow and enhance the current leadership offering to support those leaders working with an increasing range of partners, both within and across the regional improvement collaboratives.

Providing improvement and curriculum support

*Next Steps* states that ES will contribute to the function of improvement and curriculum support. It also states the regional improvement collaboratives will be established to embed collaboration for improvement across all of our schools.

Six collaboratives have been established, each bringing together a range of professionals with a relentless focus on supporting teachers and other school staff to improve children and young people’s educational attainment. They will provide carefully targeted and well-judged advice and support in order to drive improvement. In doing so, they will make use of all available evidence and data. They will help to ensure that teachers access the practical improvement support they need, when they need it. Each collaborative will formulate its own regional improvement plan to be agreed with the Chief Inspector of Education.

ES has identified a regional liaison officer for each collaborative. They will provide support and challenge to regional improvement leads as they embark on improvement planning and workforce planning. Regional liaison officers will coordinate ES’s contribution to the work of the collaboratives.

We will work as part of the collaboratives to support the development of the curriculum, providing practical advice and support to help leaders and practitioners. We will also maximize how we share highly-effective and outstanding practice in curriculum development and design, identified through inspection, to support collaboration and help others learn about what works. Most of our education staff will contribute and work alongside teachers and other frontline practitioners through the regional improvement collaboratives, motivating change and providing specialist support. This will include providing curriculum support and development locally through the collaboratives.

We are already working with SCEL in taking forward an important scoping exercise gathering the views of teachers and stakeholders in better defining professional learning and identifying
requirements at a national and local level. This will also inform the provision of curriculum support at local levels co-ordinated through the regional improvement collaboratives. ES’s role will be to provide appropriate national support and ensure coherence across these steps.

We will have a particular focus on helping leaders and practitioners to lead change and improve performance using self-evaluation. Our programmes will empower them to be leaders of learning in their own setting and support aspiring headteachers into senior leadership roles.

We are currently working on our new Corporate Plan for the period 2018-2021. This will set how we will make a significant contribution to the national vision for education and deliver on our new and enhanced role. The plan will set out our ambitions for the next three years, including how we will fulfill each area of our role. Consultation on the new Corporate Plan will take place in early in 2018.

Our new and enhanced remit demands that we are modern, flexible and dynamic in our approaches. We have worked with staff to agree a new high level narrative: ES is a partnership of people who believe passionately in the power of education to change lives. We have developed a Transformation Plan which sets out four large-scale systemic change priorities which will support us in becoming a highly-performing organisation which has a strong and authoritative voice in providing assurance and promoting improvement in Scottish education. Our Transformation Plan underpins how as an organisation we will embrace these opportunities and provides the route map we will follow over the next two years to ensure we fulfil our mission, be viewed as an excellent organisation and embed our values in how we deliver our services. We are currently consulting with staff on our draft Transformation Plan which will be published in due course.

We have streamlined our internal governance structure and appointed Non-Executive Board Members who have considerable educational expertise to ensure that we have strong, constructive challenge in how we lead the organisation.

3. The performance of Education Scotland over the past year

ES’s Annual Review, which will be published shortly, provides an overview of our performance in 2016/17 against the strategic objectives set out in our current Corporate Plan. As noted above, our new Corporate Plan is currently being developed and will be published in spring 2018.

Inspectors spend most of their inspection time in working classrooms, and our other educationalists also spend extensive periods with practitioners and other sector leaders. We continue to play a significant role in supporting improvement in the college and community learning and development sectors and as a key partner in the Developing the Young Workforce programme.

Since April 2017, we have increased the focus on evidencing outcomes within our business planning process. This work has involved defining short- and medium-term outcomes for our
programmes of work. Based on these outcomes, we have been collecting evidence of the impact of our work on different stakeholders within Scottish education. Set out below are some of the highlights that have taken place since our last Committee appearance.

We have supported the implementation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge through our Attainment Advisors who work with each local authority in Scotland. Attainment Advisors have given direct tailored support to schools and authorities, providing support and challenge to develop leadership, support schools and authorities to identify gaps, target interventions and evaluate initiatives.

This has included supporting school leaders in identifying and implementing appropriate interventions through Pupil Equity Funding. In addition to our ongoing engagement with each local authority, we led face to face workshops with 1,159 school leaders across 14 local authorities on defining outcomes and targeting interventions. The majority of participants in evaluated workshops reported increases in their understanding. Over 90% indicated the workshops were very or extremely valuable and they were extremely likely to share content with colleagues.

As part of our work on the National Improvement Framework we have led professional learning events on quality assurance and moderation for practitioners for all local authorities. To ensure school leaders are fully aware of national priorities, in September 2017 we led five regional events across Scotland, which were attended by 656 headteachers and senior staff. 97% of respondents reported at least one benefit, including hearing about practice they could apply and helping them think differently or find solutions to their current challenges. 75% of respondents reported they intended to revisit school plans and initiatives following the event and just over a third said they intended to follow up with the new professional contacts they had made.

We made a significant contribution to the STEM Education and Training Strategy for Scotland launched in October 2017. Our contributions to the Strategy were informed by the learning from the National STEM Project which piloted approaches to STEM in five school clusters across four local authorities. We also drew on the learning from the Improving Gender Balance Project which was a three-year pilot to find new approaches to tackling gender stereotypes and promoting gender balance in STEM. This work was undertaken in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and the Institute of Physics. A number of the approaches developed through these programmes are now being extended to other authorities through the Raising Aspirations in Science Education (RAiSE) Programme and actions within the National STEM Education and Training Strategy.

ES contributes knowledge from our inspection and review work to help improve educational performance. For example, in 2017 we collated our unique insights from all the inspection and review work carried out between 2012 and 2016 in our report Quality and improvement in Scottish education 2012-2016.

In 2016/17 we carried out 161 school inspections, an increase of 12.6% compared to 2015/16, and more than the 9% increase we committed to achieving.
We continued to provide clear, streamlined national guidance and support which is well-used. We published the definitive guidance on implementing Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in August 2016, and as a result strong progress has been made streamlining approaches to planning. National standards have been set out clearly in the Benchmarks, giving teachers and other practitioners clear lines of progression to support consistency in their professional judgments. Strong strategic guidance was issued by the Interim HM Chief Inspector of Education in August 2017 giving direction on further embedding CfE, streamlining assessment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

We are able to evidence a significant contribution to developing practitioners’ and leaders’ knowledge, skills and understanding in national priority areas. Those we work with report that we provide significant added value – particularly in providing structured opportunities for professional dialogue and peer learning which enable them to meet colleagues from outside their own settings. They also report that our engagement influences their practice and that they intend to make changes to their practice as a result. In the coming months our aim is to gather more evidence about where our engagement is most successful in leading to changes in practice, to inform continued improvement in how we work within the Scottish education sector and continually improve our own support.

We will continue to improve how we measure and report on our impact as we move forward with our new remit and our new Corporate Plan.

4. Education Scotland’s resources in the next financial year

ES’s core budget for 2017/18 is £21.4m. In 2016/17 ES received £12.8 m as in-year transfers to support specific SG priorities and projects. The equivalent figure for 2017/18 transfers will be available in January 2018. Decisions in terms of future funding will be set out as part of the budget process.

Significant structural and cultural change will be required to ensure that ES has the right people with the right skills available in the right place to deliver our new and enhanced remit efficiently and effectively. In the next few months we will develop and implement a new business delivery model, with supporting systems, structures and processes, to transition the organisation from a national, programme-focused model, to a predominantly regional focus. Work on this is already underway and we are confident that our new model will be in place in time to support the regional improvement collaboratives in the delivery of their implementation plans.

We undertook a review of skills of our education-focused staff in the organisation during 2017. This review will play a key role in helping to shape our strategic workforce plan for 2018/19 and beyond.
5. Conclusion

ES’s appearance at Committee coincides with an exciting period in the Agency’s evolution. A new Corporate Plan and Transformation Plan are in the latter stages of development, and we are looking forward to working with the education sector in new and innovative ways to further improve educational outcomes.