



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 12 March 2013

Session 4

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**Tuesday 12 March 2013**

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**EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2013, Session 4**

**CONVENER**

\*Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

\*Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

\*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

\*Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab)

\*Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)

\*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

\*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:**

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP) (Committee Substitute)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Terry Shevlin

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Education and Culture Committee

*Tuesday 12 March 2013*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:02*]

### Decisions on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Stewart Maxwell):** Good morning. I welcome members to the eighth meeting in 2013 of the Education and Culture Committee. I remind everyone that electronic devices should be switched off at all times.

Apologies have been received from George Adam this morning. I welcome Marco Biagi to the committee as his substitute—it is his second week in a row acting as a substitute, but not his second time substituting for George Adam.

Under the first item on our agenda, I seek members' agreement to take items 3, 4 and 5 in private. Do we agree to do so?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Are members also content to take in private at future meetings items on our draft interim report on the inquiry into decision making on whether children should be taken into care?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Petition

### Education (Qualified Teachers' Contact Hours) (PE1391)

10:03

**The Convener:** Our next item concerns petition PE1391, on protecting the right of children to be taught by qualified teachers for 25 hours a week. The committee is invited to agree what action, if any, it wishes to take on the petition. The last time that we considered the petition, we agreed to write to the cabinet secretary to seek his views on the general issues that it raises. The cabinet secretary's response is included in the relevant papers, which I am sure that members have read.

Do members have any comments on the petition and the response from the cabinet secretary?

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** I thank the committee for keeping the petition open the last time it was discussed and for agreeing to write to the cabinet secretary.

I welcome the cabinet secretary saying in his letter that he does not support the model of education provision that was proposed by Renfrewshire Council. I note that he said that there is no need for legislation—that statement is important. I also note that he stated that there should be full and effective consultation with parents before major changes are made to the way in which local authorities deliver education. Of course, my colleagues and I—and, I am sure, the Renfrewshire parent council forum—will stay vigilant to ensure that none of the proposals are brought forward again in future.

The cabinet secretary's letter is helpful. I think that I would be happy for the petition to be closed.

**Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** The cabinet secretary has outlined in detail the complexities of delivering education within the context of the curriculum for excellence. Outside experts can play a part in the delivery. The letter gives an extremely full response to the petition. I agree with Mr Bibby that we should close the petition.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** The idea of using outside experts is not new; it happens all the time in schools. The main substance of what we are discussing is that outside experts should not be used as a substitute for qualified teaching staff. That was the main issue with the approach of Renfrewshire Council—the previous council, not the current one—on this matter.

**The Convener:** And your view on the petition?

**Neil Findlay:** I am quite happy for the petition to be closed, if the petitioners believe that their issues have been addressed.

**The Convener:** I agree with the members who have spoken. The cabinet secretary's letter is helpful and provides absolute clarity on the Government's position on the issue that has been raised, particularly the comments that Neil Bibby has referred to. Further, the cabinet secretary mentions Education Scotland's report, "The Involvement of External Experts in School Education" and says:

"I fully accept the recommendations in the report."

That is extremely helpful.

The letter deals with the issues that are raised by the petition and makes clear the Government's view. I agree with colleagues that, given that response and that clarity, we should close the petition. Do we agree to close the petition, for the reasons outlined?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** As the committee has agreed to hold the next items in private, I close the meeting to the public.

10:06

*Meeting continued in private until 13:09.*

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