

TEACHER PANEL

EMPOWERING SCHOOLS

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the Scottish Government's development of an empowered school system.

Background

2. In *Education Governance: Next Steps* published in June 2017, the Scottish Government set out our vision to deliver a teacher-led and empowered education system. This included commitments to ensure the decisions which most affect learning and teaching in schools, and therefore the outcomes for children and young people, are made in consultation with them and by those closest to them.
3. We remain committed to empowering our schools to improve outcomes for their children and young people. International evidence shows that empowered schools are more likely to achieve excellence and equity.

Consideration of Stakeholder Views

4. An extensive consultation on how best to empower and support schools was conducted over the period November 2017 to January 2018. The result of this was a clear message from education professionals, local authorities, parents and pupils that they strongly support the principle of empowering schools. However, there remained a concern that new legislation at this time could create an unhelpful distraction, take some time to take effect and be a burden to the sector.
5. It has always been recognised that legislation alone would not drive the changes to culture and practice we need – that takes a balanced combination of culture change, enhanced capacity and a supporting structure. Ministers therefore decided to place legislation on hold whilst pursuing with partners non-legislative approaches to achieving reform.

Collaborative Approach to Achieving Empowerment

6. The Scottish Government and local government partners have worked intensively to reach agreement on implementation of two key elements of the reform agenda:
 - a Joint Agreement on Regional Improvement Collaboratives with regional leadership, collaboration with Education Scotland and initial regional improvement plans now in place and more detailed plans provided in September – all achieved at pace, in partnership and with no legislation; and
 - a landmark agreement which will see the Headteachers' Charter and meaningful school empowerment, collaboration and pupil and parent participation happening across Scotland this year.

7. The agreement on school empowerment was published on 26 June, along with a full draft Education (Scotland) Bill and accompanying documents which could be introduced to Parliament in future if required to ensure the empowerment of schools. However, agreement has been reached that real change can be achieved through greater partnership working and collaboration across the system and there is a shared commitment to giving that approach the best chance to be impactful. Progress towards achieving our ambition for an empowered school system will be reviewed at the end of the 2018/19 school session.

Progress Since Announcement

8. The joint agreement commits the Scottish Government and local government to deliver at pace through non-legislative means:
 - school empowerment through the establishment of a Headteachers' Charter and associated guidance;
 - a local authority self-evaluation framework to review school empowerment; and
 - a strategy for the evaluation of progress towards an empowered school system.
9. Work is already under way to progress the joint agreement through a steering group chaired by the Chief Inspector of Education. The steering group involves the key bodies responsible for delivering the joint agreement (the Scottish Government, COSLA, SOLACE, ADES, Education Scotland) with the addition of the GTCS, the Improvement Service, the Chief Social Work Adviser and a number of practising headteachers.
10. There is a collective commitment to working quickly and collaboratively to provide clarity and support to schools.