

EDUCATION LEADERS FORUM

2nd MEETING – 1 OCTOBER 2018, BOROUGHMUIR HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH

The second meeting of the Education Leaders' Forum was held at Boroughmuir High School, Edinburgh on Monday 1st October.

Agenda

- 12.00 Networking and opportunity for short tour of the school
- 12.45 Welcome and introductions by Deputy First Minister
- 13:00 Welcome to the school by Headteacher, David Dempster and pupils from Boroughmuir High School
- 13.15 Workshop 1 – Education Reform – Joint Agreement and International Council of Education Adviser Recommendations – discussion and feedback session
- 14.15 Networking break – tea/coffee
- 14.45 Workshop 2 – National Improvement Framework Review and Improvement Plan for 2019 – discussion and feedback session
- 15.45 Deputy First Minister Q and A session
- 16:00 Summary and Close

Welcome and introductions

1. In opening the meeting Mr Swinney, Deputy First Minister (DFM) and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills, welcomed everyone to the Forum. He thanked the pupils and the staff of Boroughmuir High School for the warm welcome and providing the opportunity of a short tour around the impressive, recently built school.
2. DFM welcomed several young people from the school who would be taking part in the Forum, encouraging them to give their honest views and feedback on the discussion points that would follow. This was their opportunity to contribute towards ensuring the pupil voice is being heard and listened to.

A welcome by Headteacher, David Dempster, and pupils of Boroughmuir High School

3. The Headteacher thanked the DFM for the opportunity to host the Forum and for providing the platform for staff and pupils to showcase their school and their musical talents as well as take part in important discussions affecting Scottish education.

4. Primary 1 pupils provided a short presentation about what it was like to be part of the new school, the welcoming environment it had created and the diversity within the classroom. This was followed by a presentation by the head boy and head girl from the school who gave an insight into the improvements and the quality of the new school building and the new opportunities created, in comparison to the old school.

Workshop 1 – Education Reform – Joint Agreement and International Council of Education Adviser Recommendations – discussion and feedback session [paper 02(01)]

5. In introducing this workshop DFM spoke of the importance of schools being able to have the discretion to make decisions at a local level, providing local control within schools and ensuring flexibility to adapt to individual settings. A joint agreement had been reached between the Scottish Government and local government to work together collaboratively to create an empowered system of education. He highlighted that a lot of progress had been made through working collaboratively with local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), which had removed the need to legislate at this time. For example, work on the proposed Headteachers' Charter which sets out powers and responsibilities of headteachers and which would give them greater control over resources and the ability to take decisions forward. This collaborative approach was in keeping with the advice the Scottish Government had received from the International Council of Education Advisers who were very supportive of a collaborative rather than a legislative approach to make progress in three key aspects of the education system: culture, capacity and structure.
6. Members of the Forum were asked to discuss and consider the following points in group discussion and feedback to the plenary:
 - How might Scottish Ministers ensure that empowerment of headteachers as leaders of learning and teaching enhances collaboration in the education system rather than creating isolation at school level?
 - Are there lessons which can be learned from other countries on how to generate cultural change alongside changes to roles and responsibilities?
 - Are there examples of good practice from other countries of effective support being provided to enable schools and school leaders to take on more empowered roles?
 - How might Scottish Ministers best effect the transition from the language of reform to the language of improvement?

A summary of the feedback from members of the Forum is described below:

- Genuine headteacher empowerment would require real cultural change. That empowerment should not be limited to headteachers alone, there was a need to empower all people within the school setting to focus more on teachers as a whole and less on headteachers. This should include ensuring that the pupil voice is heard and listened to.

- Whilst changes to resources and capacity are important, they will not by themselves deliver the cultural changes which are of the greatest importance. It was however important to build capacity, rules and responsibilities, and relationships to help create a positive culture and earn trust.
- Lessons which can be learned from other countries on how to generate cultural change alongside changes to roles and responsibilities include:
 - Learn from our own system, other countries recognise Scotland's system.
 - Wales – regional lessons – we could learn from their phase 1.
 - England – feels like a more competitive environment, with data used to construct 'league tables'; we do not want to go down that route, and should continue to work collaboratively and ensure data is used to support improvement.
 - Germany has good examples of headteachers influencing models.
 - Australia – headteachers employed by local authority, not individual school. They review their role and move around schools.
- Professional development is important in all aspects of education and teaching. We need to share good practice at classroom level and add to the value of our education system.
- There needs to be an easier way to share good practice, ideas and solutions at a local level. Headteachers need a platform for this and the development of the RICs could provide this platform.
- Look at the structure as a multi-layered approach and share good practice at every layer. Ensure change is not happening for the sake of change.
- We need to consider the type of leadership and collaborative leadership at all levels. Considering both "bottom up" and "top down" approaches.
- Alongside regional collaboration there is a need for more local collaboration. More joined up thinking is required, including with wider children services and other partner bodies.
- Decision making should be carried out in collaboration with all including the community and parental engagement.
- The transition period towards new ways of working can be complicated and complex. Colleges, whilst they are aware it is at an early stage, are keen to be involved in working with the RICs. Colleges are also keen to work closely with wider partners including headteachers and unions.
- Recognition of the distinctiveness of Scottish schools is key. The rurality of Scotland poses unique challenges. We need to ensure equity when enhancing

the quality of leadership, ensuring rural schools improve in the same way as urban schools.

- Scottish Ministers may best effect the transition from the language of reform to the language of improvement by providing sufficient support services. Inspections should focus on improvement and self-evaluation. We need to have confidence in people's competence. Conversely, it was suggested that the Scottish Government should look again at the use of language around improvement. It could suggest that we are not getting it right. We need to celebrate successes and the good that exists in the system.

Workshop 2 – National Improvement Framework Review and Improvement Plan for 2019 – discussion and feedback session

7. The DFM spoke of the statutory duty to review the National Improvement Framework annually and the role of the attendees in contributing to this. With this in mind, as part of the 2018 review, the Education Leaders' Forum provided the opportunity for members and young people to express their views. The views gathered at the Forum would help to inform the annual review of the National Improvement Framework and the development of the 2019 Improvement Plan.
8. Members of the Forum were asked to discuss and consider the following points in group discussion and feedback to the plenary:
 - Whether there should be any changes to the NIF priorities and/or the drivers of improvement.
 - What further improvement activities for 2019 are needed and how can they be measured?
 - Are there gaps in the evidence to help us to understand what is working?
 - Should there be more information on early learning and childcare and health and wellbeing in the NIF?
 - What more can we do to ensure CfE, and the importance of the 4 capacities, is encapsulated in the NIF?
 - The benefits and drawbacks of a more interactive online NIF Evidence Dashboard.

A summary of the feedback received from members of the Forum is described below:

- The general consensus was that there was no need to change the overall direction of the NIF. The NIF was focussing on the right priorities and drivers of improvement.
- Whilst parental engagement is a driver of the NIF, some felt that this was limiting and exclusive, particularly for those children and young people whose circumstances do not include a parent. There are many out-of-school influences on pupils, including extra-curricular activities, youth groups and peer groups. Perhaps consider re-branding this driver as community engagement.

- Young people and wider community engagement is not a driver for improvement. Could we be missing something by not having young people drive improvement and change?
- While it was recognised that it was one of the four priorities, there was a need to focus more on young people's health and wellbeing, including mental health, as core to the NIF. There was a strong feeling that this priority should be strengthened and concern that there was not enough support for children and young people within schools. Support was often limited and sometimes only offered in extreme circumstances.
- The Scottish Government should consider whether mental health should be separated out from the health and wellbeing priority of the NIF. There was general agreement amongst Forum members and young people at the Forum that there needs to be more focus given to providing mental health support for children and young people.
- Teacher health and wellbeing should also be considered and be included within the NIF.
- The Scottish Government should consider whether there is too much focus placed on 'successful learners' in the NIF. Is it dominating, with other priorities not getting the correct amount of focus?
- Look at the language around attainment/wider achievement. There should be a metric for all rather than separating it out. We need to change the language and culture of what is being achieved within our education system.
- The children and young people's voice should be seen within all drivers of the NIF, not only health and wellbeing.
- There needed to be a focus on creating strong pupil/teacher relationships. It was important that teachers have the confidence and pupils have the trust in teachers to discuss health and wellbeing issues. Physical and social education programmes can be an effective way to raise awareness.
- Ethos and relationships – there was a need to engage with young people as early as possible in their learner journey in particular those at risk of not attaining: who makes a difference for them and who takes the responsibility to engage with them? We should foster a culture that gives children more of a voice in, and ownership of, their learning journey.
- The NIF is strongly focussed around teachers. We must remember there is a whole team of staff around children and young people in schools.
- Pressures are put on the system if staff aren't fully trained or ready to take on roles. This should be taken account of in the NIF.
- Ensure professional learning pathways are inclusive and holistic as possible.

- Education has gone through a long period of change and now it needs time to embed so we can reflect on where we are and what we have.
- Assessments are a really powerful driver and culture of the system. Assessment can be used to support learning or judgement so it is important that this is used as part of a growing and developing system.

Deputy First Minister – Q and A Session

9. A short question and answer session followed the workshops. A Forum member spoke of how impressed they had been with the contribution to the discussions by the young people of the school and how they admired the long term commitment of the Boroughmuir headteacher. They also raised concern about the ability to continue to retain headteachers due to workplace pressures and concerns about pay. DFM noted these comments and the ongoing discussions between unions and employers on teachers' pay.
10. A young person from the school raised concerns about funding for musical tuition and that there would be many people disadvantaged across Scotland if this funding was removed. Music and drama were enriching to both education and life experience.
11. DFM thanked the members for their comments and re-iterated that he is listening to concerns being raised and will continue to do so in decision making going forward. He explained that the Scottish Government allocates money to local authorities and that it is for each local authority to decide how best to allocate their resources.

Summary & Close

12. The Deputy First Minister thanked everyone for their attendance and invaluable input into both workshops. He thanked the school for hosting and the pupils involved for providing their views. He welcomed feedback from the Forum.
13. The next Education Leaders' Forum is scheduled for spring next year and full details will be provided in due course.