

Dyslexia Scotland Response:

Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: A Governance Review

(Submitted on 21/12/2016)

About You

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation? Organisation

What is your organisation? Dyslexia Scotland

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference: Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise? Yes

1. What are the strengths of the current governance arrangements of Scottish education?

In theory, there are good legislation, policy and structures in place, with accountability built in at school, local authority and national levels.

2. What are the barriers within the current governance arrangements to achieving the vision of excellence and equity for all?

As has been outlined in the Accounts Commission 'School education report' and elsewhere, there is significant variation in attainment between councils, schools and groups of pupils. Similarly, as outlined in Education Scotland's 'Making Sense: Education for children and young people with dyslexia in Scotland' report, there is significant variation in attainment and quality of practice between councils, schools and groups of pupils with dyslexia. This postcode lottery is therefore a huge barrier to achieving equity for all.

In the case of support for pupils with dyslexia, there is a significant gap between very good practice (with knowledgeable teachers, a whole school approach and active involvement of pupil and parents in understanding

dyslexia and its impact on learning) and very poor practice (including limited awareness of what dyslexia is; an ability or unwillingness to identify dyslexia; little or no support of a pupil with dyslexia and/or a failure to communicate to parents how the dyslexia is being identified or supported) . This variation between good and poor practice exists between schools within the same local authority and between authorities. In some cases, teachers or Support for Learning staff are prevented from carrying out their responsibilities in relation to supporting pupils with dyslexia because of barriers being put in place by the Head teacher or by the local authority (e.g. where a local authority does not use the Scottish Government working definition of dyslexia or does not have a dyslexia policy or does not support use of the national Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit). Local authorities' own quality assurance procedures for monitoring and evaluating provision for learners with dyslexia are very variable. Some authorities consistently fail to identify sufficient numbers of learners with dyslexia, as evidenced by the Annual Pupil Census, but do not take any action to rectify the situation.

In terms of ITE, the content of PGDE courses for example do not appear to link directly to current national expectations or requirements - e.g. how well are student teachers being equipped to meet the requirement for all teachers to focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing ? Our experience shows that primary and especially secondary teachers report an inability or lack of knowledge about how to teach pupils reading, writing and literacy skills. This is why the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit working group developed its reading and writing circles which have been very popular:

<http://www.addressingdyslexia.org/reading-circle/>

<http://www.addressingdyslexia.org/writing-circle/>

If universities do not cover these key areas, how well equipped are NQTs to understand additional support needs such as dyslexia? If a NQT has a pupil with dyslexia in their class, are there other teachers in the school who are able to support them? Irrespective of subject, how is ITE embedding literacy and numeracy into courses and how are they addressing the needs of pupils in the classroom with additional support needs?

There are also barriers in terms of data collection of additional support needs at local and national levels. In the last Scottish Government pupil census published in 2015 only 2.5 percent of pupils (just under 17,000 from a total primary and secondary school population of nearly 673,000) were identified by local authorities as being dyslexic. We cannot be absolutely precise about the figure that should be identified but 10 percent of the school population having dyslexia would be a reasonable estimate. There is therefore clearly a

gap between the actual number of pupils with dyslexia and those being identified within the census.

3. Should the key principles below underpin our approach to reform? Yes Are there other principles which should be applied?

Ensure that our teachers have sufficient and appropriate opportunities for professional learning.

4. What changes to governance arrangements are required to support decisions about children's learning and school life being taken at school level?

We welcome the proposals for more decisions about school life to be taken at school level via devolved school management and to provide resources directly to schools. While we have found many local authorities to be very supportive of our work there have been situations where some local authorities have not been as helpful as they could have been, as outlined under Question 2 above. Teachers and support staff need to be fully equipped to identify and support those with dyslexia and other learning difficulties. This must include overcoming barriers to learning and addressing young people's emotional well-being as well as their literacy difficulties. There need to be clear accountability arrangements built in which can be easily implemented when outcomes are not being met or where parents, teachers or pupils have highlighted concerns. There also needs to be support available to Head Teachers for professional development and ongoing collaborative learning.

5. What services and support should be delivered by schools? What responsibilities should be devolved to teachers and head teachers to enable this? You may wish to provide examples of decisions currently taken by teachers or headteachers and decisions which cannot currently be made at school level.

In relation to dyslexia, we are aware of situations where teachers or headteachers have been discouraged from using the Scottish Government's definition of dyslexia or from giving pupils formal identification of dyslexia, or from using national agreed resources such as the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit because of policies at local authority level.

A whole school approach to dyslexia and inclusive practice can be beneficial to all learners. This works particularly well when teachers have access to a cluster-wide approach to professional development and sharing. It is important that there is also a supportive but strong inspection framework.

6. How can children, parents, communities, employers, colleges, universities and others play a stronger role in school life? What actions should be taken to support this?

As mentioned in Question 5, a whole school approach to inclusive practice can be extremely effective. Where this approach works best, involvement of pupils, parents, teachers and partners in the community from the public, private and voluntary sectors is encouraged at all levels - e.g. parent/pupil champions in Dyslexia Friendly schools; an encouraging 'open door' approach to those parents who may not feel comfortable in a school environment; bridging the gap between school and community by encouraging access for teachers, parents and young people to e.g. Dyslexia Scotland branch open meetings; schools sharing information about support and services provided in the community by organisations such as ourselves.

7. How can the governance arrangements support more community-led early learning and childcare provision particularly in remote and rural areas?

As above, by encouraging greater involvement of community and third sector organisations.

8. How can effective collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners be further encouraged and incentivised?

By continuing to encourage networks for teachers to learn and collaborate (both online via e.g. Glow/Facebook, such as Glow Support for Learning Group, and face to face via e.g. twilight sessions); by enabling teachers to have space and permission to access learning; by providing access to high quality development and learning opportunities (including those provided by the third sector - e.g. Dyslexia Scotland's annual Education conference; membership; attendance at local branch meetings); by continued dissemination about free resources such as the online Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit.

There is a need for Support for Learning teachers to have access to high quality learning and to feel professionally valued - this was highlighted at a series of 'conversation events' run by the Scottish Government for Support for Learning practitioners as part of the 'Making Sense' review recommendations.

There is work underway by the Scottish Government Dyslexia 'Making Sense working group' to develop online modules (at 3 levels), to be hosted on Open University's Open Educational Practices with links to the Toolkit. This will be available by the end of 2017. Early discussions with GTCS are exploring the potential for level 3 to be linked to a GTCS formal accreditation process, so

that teachers can have professional recognition in identifying dyslexia. There is potential for collaborative working across local authority clusters as part of the GTCS Professional Learning Excellence Awards. For individual practitioners, the module could be linked to the Individual Professional Recognition Award.

9. What services and support functions could be provided more effectively through clusters of schools working together with partners?

Support at cluster level to teachers to enhance their knowledge, expertise, support and learning, such as collaborative learning; support for headteachers.

Support to enable teachers/practitioners to collect and use pupil census data in the right way.

10. What services or functions are best delivered at a regional level? This may include functions or services currently delivered at a local or a national level.

Support at regional level to all teachers to enhance their knowledge, expertise, support and learning. In relation to dyslexia, there are excellent example of services that offer support in dyslexia awareness and support, e.g. Glasgow Dyslexia Support Service; Falkirk SpLD support service. Both of these services also work very closely with Dyslexia Scotland and with local branches.

Support to enable teachers to deliver on nationally agreed policies and initiatives, e.g. language and literacy advisers; professional development.

11. What factors should be considered when establishing new educational regions?

There should be a balance between a relationship-based and system-based approach. The larger the region, the more remote the support will seem for teachers.

12. What services or support functions should be delivered at a national level?

Broadly, the same as at present.

Training/support that is linked to national policies/initiatives or areas of specialism, e.g. for dyslexia:

Making Sense working group hosted by the Scottish Government/Education Scotland.

Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit working group - national group with input from national and local partners.

13. How should governance support teacher education and professional learning in order to build the professional capacity we need?

There need to be clear systems in place for teachers to access professional learning when needed (ITE, NQTs, Career-long professional learning).

The inspection framework needs to highlight key areas of development in inspections, e.g. the responsibilities of all teachers for literacy, numeracy and health and well-being.

Policy, practice and legislation need to be linked so that the principles of e.g. ASL legislation are implemented and easier to challenge when things go wrong.

There need to be ways of building in support for teachers undergoing learning by enabling access to a collaborative network to explore what works and what needs to be improved.

14. Should the funding formula for schools be guided by the principles that it should support excellence and equity, be fair, simple, transparent, predictable and deliver value for money? Should other principles be used to inform the design of the formula?

Yes, these principles are important and should guide the funding formula.

Should funding be prioritised to schools which are not meeting the principles or which are struggling to meet certain principles? Should they be linked to inspection reviews and recommendations for improvement?

15. What further controls over funding should be devolved to school level?

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16. How could the accountability arrangements for education be improved?

There should be clearer division between the inspection and delivery elements of Education Scotland. It is not appropriate to have one organisation involved in developing and implementing policy while at the same time claiming to be evaluating the delivery of that policy independently.

There needs to be closer scrutiny by HMIE of the arrangements made by local authorities to quality assure their own service delivery.

An inspection model that monitors the responsibilities of all teachers for literacy, numeracy and health and well being?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the governance of education in Scotland?

- Easier access for parents wishing to challenge schools.
- Transparent and clear outline of what should be being provided for pupils with Additional support needs or how it is decided.
- Critical mass of networks to share good practice.
- Clear accountability systems to ensure that the national requirements are delivered.

We welcome the commitment in the National Improvement Framework to the following:

- We will collect nationally, and at local authority level, data on the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels for literacy and numeracy at the end of P1, P4, P7 and S3. This will be based on teacher judgement – informed by standardised assessment – and will tell us how children and young people are progressing with their learning. **(We welcome having access to more data)**

- At a school level, teachers will have a nationally consistent standardised assessment on aspects of literacy and numeracy to inform their judgement. The development of these standardised assessments, which will be piloted in 2016 and available for use in 2017, will include an associated training package for schools. This will support a clear interpretation of results and how these connect to and inform other sources of assessment evidence. **(We welcome standardised assessments)**

- In parallel to the development of the standardised element of assessment, work with partners to refresh our collective support for other assessment approaches, including: setting out more clarity about standards and the evidence that should be in place to assure teachers about children's progress; substantial support for moderation of teacher's professional judgement within and across local authority boundaries; and clarity about recording practices. **(Excellent: we have already signalled the problem of diversity of practice across local authorities in identifying pupils with dyslexia)**

- Parents will be able to access information from teacher's professional judgement and the underlying standardised assessment data about their own child's learning, providing valuable, nationally consistent information about children's progress and signalling where further support may be

required at home and in school. **(As a charity supporting parents we welcome parents being given more information about their child's progress)**

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?

Slightly satisfied

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?

Slightly satisfied

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