

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2019**

**TOWARDS AN EMPOWERED LEARNING SYSTEM**

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**ABSTRACT**

Improving the education and life chances of our children and young people is the defining mission of our Scottish education system. Our shared ambition is to close the unacceptable gap in attainment between our least and most disadvantaged children and to raise attainment for all. The Education Reform Programme, subsequent priorities emerging from the Scottish Government and COSLA Education Reform Joint Agreement, June 2018 as well as the related draft agreed Head Teachers' Charter and Devolved School Management (DSM) guidance, detail the evolving role of the Head Teacher towards realising our goals. This report seeks to provide the policy context towards empowerment and outline the responsibility of the local authority in supporting this process.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Agree that Angus Head Teachers be granted greater flexibility to lead collaborative work to co-design and develop a curriculum which best meets the needs of all learners in their local context;
- (ii) Note and support the proposal that Angus Head Teachers lead change and improvement, reflecting and informing the local improvement plan;
- (iii) Note and support the proposal that Angus Head Teachers play an active role in designing and reviewing recruitment and staffing approaches; design a staffing structure which best supports the school's curriculum and leadership requirements and be integral in the appointment of staff;
- (iv) Note that a review of Devolved School Management is planned for Autumn 2019
- (v) Note that development work is in progress with Head Teachers to develop a system of 'networked autonomy' that supports all Angus' learners

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plans:

The best start in life for children  
A skilled and adaptable workforce  
More opportunities for people to achieve success

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Scottish Government's 2017 consultation 'Empowering Schools: A consultation on the provisions of the Education (Scotland) Bill' set out clear aims and objectives in relation to the Education Bill: improving the education and life chances of our children and young people, closing the unacceptable gap in attainment between the least and most disadvantaged children and raising attainment for all. The Bill sought to establish a Head Teachers' Charter which would set out the rights and responsibilities of the Head Teacher as the leader of learning in their school.

- 3.2 The Scottish Government and COSLA Education Reform Joint Agreement, June 2018 (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-bill-policy-ambition-joint-agreement/>) was produced following collaboration with representatives from Scottish Government and local authorities. The joint agreement references the Head Teacher Charter and outlines empowerment in improvement, curriculum, staffing and funding.
- 3.3 In February 2019 agreed drafts of 'A Headteachers' Charter for School Improvement' (<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/HeadteachersCharterFinal.pdf>) and 'Empowering School Leaders' (<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/EmpoweringSchoolLeadersFinal.pdf>) were produced. Both documents outline principles which support the culture of empowerment.
- 3.4 In April 2019 Scottish Government and COSLA published 'Devolved School Management Guidelines (Draft)' (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/devolved-school-management-guidelines-draft/pages/4/>). This document has been devised to assist local authorities to develop their own devolved management (DSM) schemes. This document references the aforementioned documents.

## **4. CURRENT POSITION**

### **4.1 IMPROVEMENT**

The Local Authority has statutory responsibility for the provision and improvement of education in Angus. Head Teachers are responsible for producing an annual Standards and Qualities (S&Q) Report and School Improvement Plan (SIP). The improvement plans reflect both local and national priorities. The Education Authority also produces an annual education plan which combines school, local and national priorities. An annual authority report evaluates achievement of this plan in relation to the National Improvement Framework (<https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/>). Improvement work being supported on a regional basis is outlined in the Tayside Regional Improvement Plan. The Angus Schools Partnership, a representative group of Head Teachers, provides support and challenge in the development of policy and practice to inform school improvement.

### **4.2 CURRICULUM**

All Angus schools deliver Curriculum for Excellence which aims to help children and young people to become:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

A range of local authority policies and guidance support Head Teachers to design curriculum in their schools which adhere to the principles of curriculum design: challenge and enjoyment; breadth; progression; depth; personalisation and choice; coherence; relevance. In practice this has led to the development of consistent approaches to curriculum organisation. For example all Angus secondary schools currently offer six subjects in S4 and organise their school days in the same manner. Primary schools have worked together to establish progression pathways for a number of subject areas in order that children experience broadly similar learning experiences throughout their primary education.

### **4.3 STAFFING**

The main annual primary staffing exercise and the deployment of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) is organised centrally. NQT allocation is also organised centrally for secondary schools. Secondary Head Teachers are responsible for the appointment of all other staff, in accordance with the relevant AJNCT agreement, up to the level of Depute Head Teacher at all other times. The draft Head Teacher Charter Agreement states that Head Teachers should be integral to the appointment of staff in partnership with the Local Authority. To allow Primary Head Teachers greater involvement in appointing teaching staff there has been a move to a Cluster staffing model. This allows Head Teachers within a particular Cluster to appoint teachers in accordance with the best interests of the children and young people within their school communities. The process for the recruitment of Head Teachers is outlined in an AJNCT agreement.

#### 4.4 **FINANCE**

Head Teachers are allocated an annual budget as per the current DSM scheme. They hold responsibility for this devolved budget in terms of planning and managing expenditure. The amount of DSM is calculated for each school mainly on staffing and building costs. Per capita of £17 (per session of early years), £34 (Broad General Education), and £68 (senior phase) per pupil is also added to provide a small budget for resources and ongoing expenditure. The DSM is a unique council budget as it allows for significant virement and the carry forward of any planned over and underspends. The Angus DSM scheme informed and aligns to national guidance however by summer 2019 new national guidance will be formalised.

As well as management of the DSM scheme, each head teacher is responsible for two other aspects of finance – the school fund and the pupil equity fund. Each school has a school fund which contains the money gathered by the school community through fundraising efforts and any other monetary donations. It should be noted that parent council funds are held separately and are the responsibility of the parent council. The school fund is overseen through a school constitution and is audited externally annually. Over recent years a significant improvement focus in the management of the school fund has clarified expectations and provided supportive guidance. However there are still improvements to be made in this area. The improvement work in this area was underway when a further funding stream, the national pupil equity fund (PEF), was put in place.

PEF sees funding go direct from Scottish Government to individual schools who receive an amount of funding based on the number of children and young people they have who are entitled to a free school meal. All but three Angus schools receive this funding. Like other Scottish Government grants, it comes with the requirement to report on impact of its use. Some Angus schools have received significant amounts (up to £160,000) of additional finance through the PEF and they are obliged to consult with their school community as to how best to use the fund. Whereas schools have welcomed this additional resource, this has presented a new financial challenge for head teachers to manage alongside their other financial responsibilities. The management of the school fund was the subject of internal audit assessment earlier this session and the management of pupil equity fund will be audited prior to the end of the school session.

### 5. **PROPOSALS**

#### 5.1 **IMPROVEMENT**

It is proposed that the local authority continues to work with Head Teachers in support of the 'joint agreement' and associated documents. The continued approach to developing increased collaboration between schools and the authority and schools with each other aims to develop a system of 'networked autonomy', ensuring that the successful work of recent years to see all our learners as 'Angus' bairns' remains a priority. This partnership approach is essential in further ensuring that arrangements in one school or locality do not disadvantage other areas and requires Head Teachers to become more and more accountable to each other. As such we will refer to our empowered learning system of networked autonomy as one in which there is collective responsibility for all Angus' learners. There will be an increased ask of the Angus Schools Partnership to represent Head Teachers' views in the development of policy and practice to support school improvement.

#### 5.2 **CURRICULUM**

Support will be provided to Head Teachers to decide on the structure of the curriculum, in particular the number and variety of offers in the senior phase. This will require effective consultation and communication with school communities. This may result in differences between schools particularly in specific years within the senior phase.

#### 5.3 **STAFFING**

Head Teachers may decide to create an alternative staffing model, albeit in accordance with AJNCT agreements and in line with existing finance. Support will be offered to Head Teachers considering alternative models to ensure alignment with council policies and procedures.

#### 5.4 **FINANCE**

It is proposed to undertake a review of DSM guidelines in Autumn 2019 to determine the need for any adaptations to current arrangements. Alongside this work, it is proposed that further improvement actions in relation to the management of the school fund and pupil equity fund are considered. This work will be undertaken with the Angus Schools Partnership and involve partners from the finance team in order to ensure that support, training, expectations and advice are coherent across all three funding streams. This will include increased awareness and business planning towards improved collaborative procurement arrangements, with the education professionals exercising autonomy in requirement setting but in a networked way to achieve compliance, efficiency and value for money. A range of improvement sessions as to the effective use of PEF will be offered by Education Scotland.

#### 6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Head Teacher will continue to be accountable and responsible for the devolved school budget, the school fund and their pupil equity fund. Moving towards greater empowerment requires all teachers to be meaningfully involved in decisions about school funding. Whilst this may require training this will have no financial implication.

#### 7. **CONSULTATION**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Director of Finance have been consulted with regard to the content of this report.

**NOTE:** The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-bill-policy-ambition-joint-agreement/>
- <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/HeadteachersCharterFinal.pdf>
- <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/EmpoweringSchoolLeadersFinal.pdf>
- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/devolved-school-management-guidelines-draft/pages/4/>
- <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/>

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