

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Tackling Bureaucracy, Response to Education Scotland Review  
**Meeting:** Education Executive  
**Date:** 8 November 2016  
**Submitted By:** Director of Children's Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The report is to:

- (i) advise the Education Executive of Education Scotland's assessment of Falkirk Council's approaches to tackling bureaucracy within schools.
- (ii) provide the Education Executive with an action plan and proposals on how Children's Services intend to address the matters raised within the review report.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

2.1 Education Executive is asked to:

- (i) **note the Education Scotland evidence template (attached as Appendix 1) and the identified aspects for improvement.**
- (ii) **agree the Children's Services Action Plan which seeks to address the areas highlighted for improvement.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 In June 2016, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills asked Education Scotland to undertake a focused review of the demands placed on schools by local authorities in relation to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), particularly around their arrangements for curriculum, planning, assessment and reporting in schools.
- 3.3 This review was planned as one strand within a wider set of actions announced in the Government's 'Delivery Plan' designed to eliminate unnecessary workload demands associated with the implementation of CfE. The review took place in August 2016.

- 3.4 To carry out this review HM Inspectors visited local authorities for around one day, during which they met Directors of Education and local authority officers; representatives of teachers' professional associations and Local Negotiating Committees for Teachers (LNCT); primary and secondary headteachers and primary and secondary teachers. Inspectors looked at arrangements, expectations and associated workload requirements for Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) placed on schools by the local authority, as well as any guidance and support provided by the authority to help minimise bureaucracy and workload.
- 3.5 In undertaking the review, HM Inspectors took account of aspects of CfE which had been identified as causes of unnecessary bureaucracy and undue workload by the Ministerial Group on Tackling Bureaucracy; the CfE Management Board 'Reflections Group' which reported on the first two diets of new national qualifications; and the Ministerial Working Group on Assessment and National Qualifications<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.6 Drawing on these reports, all of which were informed by evidence from inspections, the key themes identified were:
- forward and curriculum planning
  - assessment
  - self-evaluation and improvement planning
  - tracking, monitoring and reporting
  - IT systems
- 3.7 Inspectors explored the expectations, guidance and support which the local authority had in place for its schools in each of these areas. They were particularly interested in the actions the local authority had taken to ensure that unnecessary bureaucracy was avoided, and that effective, streamlined practice was in place across all of their schools.
- 3.8 For the purpose of this report, unnecessary bureaucracy is defined as excessive paperwork or electronic form-filling, leading to unproductive workload for staff in schools. At the same time, inspectors were asked to check that guidance or procedures issued were clear and proportionate and in themselves did not cause bureaucracy.
- 3.9 The challenge at both national and local level has been to provide the right amount of support and guidance while at the same time allowing schools and teachers' flexibility and autonomy to meet their pupils' needs.

- 3.10 This review was clearly focused on the demands placed on schools by local authorities in relation to CfE, particularly around the themes listed above. Staff interviewed by inspectors cited other issues which they believed were contributing significantly to high levels of workload pressure in their schools but which lay outwith the scope of this review. These issues varied but included, for example, SQA arrangements relating to the new National Qualifications and the volume of guidance provided by Education Scotland which required to be digested and disseminated. Assessment of these wider issues has not been made in this report.

#### How Education Scotland Undertook their Assessment in Falkirk

- 3.12 Meetings took place with groups of officers, headteachers, teachers and trade union representatives on 26 August 2016, which was the final day for the review.
- 3.13 On 9 September 2016 Education Scotland's District Assessor met with Senior Management within Children's Services to receive feedback from the review and the assessment.

### **4. Considerations**

#### Recommendations of the Review

- 4.1 Education Scotland highlighted three areas for improvement. These are clearly detailed in the evidence template which is attached as Appendix 1.

#### Children's Services Action Plan

- 4.2 Following the issue of the Review; Children's Services Management have met and discussed the assessment and the areas for improvement with headteachers and trade union representatives.
- 4.3 The Action Plan (see Appendix 2) attached has been drawn up to address the areas of improvement highlighted.

#### Next Steps/Timelines

- 4.4 The Action Plan will be progressed between now and the end of term and a report updating the Education Executive on the action taken will be brought back to the Education Executive before the end of term.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with headteachers in order to prepare and agreed the Action Plan.
- 5.2 Progress on the Action Plan will be regularly reviewed by Children's Services Management Team and by the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT).

## **6. Implications**

### **Financial/Resources**

- 6.1 Some resources may need to be provided to enable:
- central support staff to undertake some work carried out currently in schools
  - improvements to processes and systems.

At this stage it is not possible to be prescriptive as to what the level of this additional support would be.

### **Legal**

- 6.2 None

### **Risk**

- 6.3 There would be a small reputational risk to the Council if the improvement actions identified were not progressed, adopted and implemented within the timescales shown.

### **Equalities**

- 6.6 None

### **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 6.7 Not applicable.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 The report outlines how we intend to address the specific recommendations highlighted by Education Scotland as a result of their review on tackling bureaucracy in August and the corresponding action plan which will address these.

- 7.2 We will continue to engage regularly with our Local Area Officer, LNCT, Headteachers and Teachers to ensure that we are providing appropriate levels of support and challenge, which seeks to minimise bureaucracy to delivery improved educational outcomes for the children and young people of Falkirk Council

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Director of Children's Services

Author - David Mackay, Title: 01324 506601, david.mackay@falkirk.gov.uk

Date: 27 October 2016

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Falkirk Council evidence template provided by HMle

Appendix 2 Action Plan addressing recommendations from HMle

### **List of Background Papers:**

None

## Workload Review: Evidence Template

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Falkirk Council</b>
<b>Team Members</b>	
<b>Moderator</b>	
<b>Area Lead Officer</b>	

## Overall evaluation of local authority's approaches

**Strengths:**

- The authority is aware of workload issues for teachers and has been in correspondence with the SQA to share their concerns. Headteachers do not think that the authority could do any more to be supportive.
- Teachers' representatives are appreciative of the willingness of senior education managers to meet them to discuss issues, including workload.
- The positive approach taken by the authority and schools to supporting probationer teachers is appreciated by staff.

**Aspects for improvement:**

- The autonomy for headteachers in taking decisions regarding curriculum planning, assessment, tracking, monitoring, reporting and school improvement planning, whilst welcomed by most headteachers, is a source of frustration for many teachers. For example, primary teachers are frustrated about the amount of time that is required for daily/weekly planning, and feel that this time and their efforts are not sufficiently acknowledged by school leaders. They are not aware of any authority guidance regarding expectations around forward and daily planning. Such decisions are made on a school to school basis. Teachers feel that the lack of such guidance has led to inconsistency in workload between schools, with some headteachers expecting much more of their staff in the way of written daily/weekly planning than others. The authority should clarify and revisit its expectations in these areas with staff.
- Secondary staff do not think much moderation of standards is happening, including between primary and secondary. They report a lack of confidence in the reported levels of achievement of young people coming to them from primary which leads to re-assessment and increases workload. The authority should consider a council-wide approach to moderation of standards, which is inconsistent between and within schools.
- The authority should reissue and revisit the 2015 LNCT paper on tackling bureaucracy.

**Evaluation**

LA is proactive in providing support and guidance that minimises workload demands  <input type="checkbox"/>	LA provides support and guidance that places reasonable workload demands  <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>LA provides support and guidance that places undue workload demands</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LA has not provided any support or guidance  <input type="checkbox"/>
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Falkirk Council  
Children's Services

Action Plan in Response to Workload Review September 2016

**Workload review – statement 1:**

**The perceived autonomy for HTs in taking decisions regarding curriculum planning, assessment tracking, monitoring, reporting and school improvement planning, whilst welcomed by most headteachers is a source of frustration for many teachers. This results in wide variation in expectations and workload across schools. The authority should clarify and revisit its expectations in these areas with staff.**

Steps Already Taken	Next Steps
<p><u>Empowering clusters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In response to reductions in central support staffing levels, clusters are empowered to develop a Cluster Improvement Plan which articulate with schools' plans. This helps schools to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort across schools in developing planning, delivery and assessment in the classroom and promotes sharing of good practice.</li> </ul> <p><u>Recruitment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National political agenda is to support HT autonomy and this is the Falkirk approach. The recruitment of HTs and DHTs is rigorous and ensures quality staff taking up posts who are able to lead in this manner. Once appointed the provision of a HT colleague is also worth mentioning as well as the cluster supports in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with Headteacher and teachers to discuss their requirements for revised guidance.</li> <li>Review current approaches to progression frameworks at authority level, including Success Storybooks and provide strategic advice to schools- Completed.</li> <li>Review curriculum rationales at school and cluster level and provide guidance to schools.</li> <li>Review cluster improvement plans to ensure opportunities for teachers across schools and cluster to work collegiately together, with a specific focus on implementation of the national benchmarks and moderation processes.</li> <li>Review Falkirk Council's advice regarding self-evaluation and update linked to the revised How Good is Our School 4 (HGIOS4).</li> <li>Review current use of SEEMIS in primary and secondary schools and consider the capacity for improvement and support to Headteachers.</li> </ul>

- Our Assessment Centre strategy promotes effective selection of senior managers in schools and the centre.
- Extract from candidate application pack:
- *Further details are available from contact Anne Hutchison 01324 501993 or click on the following link which takes you to a playlist that includes 3 short video clips explaining the process:*

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJBh6ZaUFm-H88Fsu2o0o\\_P1zDSd2GxY2](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJBh6ZaUFm-H88Fsu2o0o_P1zDSd2GxY2)

Video 1: *What is an Assessment Centre?*

Video 2: *Who is involved in an Assessment Centre?*

Video 3: *What happens after the Assessment Centre?*

#### Leadership development

- A programme of short courses from Central Scotland Partnership provides further leadership development opportunities for staff.
- Effective leadership programmes – *To Lead or Not to Lead* (for aspiring PTs) and *Lead On* (for aspiring DHTs) *Into Headship* (for aspiring HTs), Masters-level learning etc. (for a staff in a range of posts) focus on empowering staff without overwhelming them.
- FCCS runs highly-regarded training programme for probationers, which includes focus on ensuring that planning and assessment are effective and not excessively bureaucratic.



- Adherence to the RACI model of school improvement planning is transparent in terms of demonstrating how schools' development workload is shared across teachers.
- The strong approach to ERD linked to the Council's flagship policy *Learning to Achieve* addresses all aspects of the tackling bureaucracy agenda and again the central quality assurance of this could be used as supporting evidence. See following link <http://youtu.be/NUHe3cWX-Jk>

#### Central support

- *Probationer Support Team (Primary)* has been in place since the introduction of the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) in 2002. Membership of this team has provided leadership opportunities for class teachers who have been recognised as excellent classroom practitioners, and who have the expertise to support and challenge new teachers. 75% of those who have been members of the team have gone on to promoted posts in our own schools and have been instrumental in ensuring consistently high quality support across FC Primary Schools.  
In recent years, they have taken responsibility for setting up, managing and evaluating the process of observation of classroom practice, as part of FC's robust class teacher recruitment process.

- Falkirk Council's electronic-based CPD Manager records all staff development undertaken (including in participation in leadership training opportunities) by teaching and non-teaching staff. This is crucial in minimising time wasted in gathering data and evidence about staff in contributing to their Employee Review and Development (ERD).

- Extract from GTCS Validation visit report, 2013:

*“Staff have welcomed the ERD scheme and appreciate the benefits of it. It is thought to be less time consuming and less bureaucratic than the previous scheme. Discussions on impact are recognised to be at the heart of the process and the importance of this dialogue is accepted.”*

#### School and Cluster Improvement Planning

- School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and standards and quality reports are sent to the centre and again the quality assurance of these should be available and would therefore allow for proportionate support for HTs and schools. Workload is quality assured by a centre-based staff as part of the Council's School Improvement Meetings programme. Staff show high levels of confidence and trust in the new scheme and see it as a more consistent and continuous experience with good professional learning opportunities.

**Workload Review – statement 2:**

**The authority should also consider a council-wide approach to standards, which is inconsistent between and within schools.**

Steps Already Taken	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extensive school, cluster and authority-supported moderation of CfE standards has taken place in Primary schools. However, in the absence of national standards, this has only been in the context of locally recognised standards and those set through, for example, the Big Maths and Big Writing programmes. Schools are awaiting national standards that will give increased confidence. Falkirk Council is committed to ensuring that these shared through a structured programme of support.</li><li>• Standards in SQA CfE-based courses are maintained through SQA Nominees. In Falkirk these are appointed through a rigorous programme of recruitment that ensures: Nominees are recognised as strong classroom practitioners, have a thorough understanding of the relevant SQA standards, and (iii) can hold a stance on those standards in any debate.</li><li>• Secondary Subject Development Groups were set up in addition to existing Faculty Head Groups in response to need to ensure effective systems for sharing good practice across schools.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Re-issue advice on improvement planning to all schools</li><li>• Identify the 10 requires Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs) from our schools to be trained nationally and assist with the implementation of the national moderation activities across all schools.</li><li>• Review current authority assessment, monitoring and tracking guidance in light of recent national developments and update as required.</li><li>• Encourage and support schools to participate in piloting the new standardised assessment tool when available early in 2017.</li><li>• Provide additional development opportunities to teachers on the use of exemplars linked to Significant Aspects of Learning to support moderation at school and cluster level.</li><li>• QAMSOs to provide additional twilight development opportunities to teachers in line with advice from Education Scotland.</li><li>• Establish teachers' focus group with representation from all clusters to improve communication regarding emerging needs and supports to co-create of authority guidance and advice.</li><li>• Brief parent councils about the revised advice and guidance issued to schools.</li><li>• Audit Employee Review and Development (ERD) structure to ensure that all Headteachers are making effective links between ERD, self-evaluation and school improvement</li><li>• Review and update our approaches to Validated Self Evaluation to support and challenge schools proportionately.</li><li>• Review current practices around reporting to parent and engage with all stakeholders to consider the introduction of a standardised process.</li></ul>

**Workload Review – statement 3:****The authority should reissue and revisit the 2015 LNCT paper on tackling bureaucracy**

Steps Already Taken	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In August 2015 Local Negotiating Committee of Teachers (LNCT) issued “Tackling Bureaucracy in schools” This provides clear and consistent advice to all HTs and all teachers on the authorities position on curriculum planning linked to the working time agreement, local school improvement planning and teacher planning at class level.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss and update the draft LNCT 2015 paper on planning in the primary school at the next NGT meeting.</li><li>• Re-issue final paper to all primary schools</li><li>• HTs to meet with their teaching staff as part of the SBNC and draw up a school action plan</li><li>• Joint Secretaries to review all working time agreements and use audit data to inform future practice.</li></ul>
<b>Overall:</b> <b>LA provides support and guidance to assist reduce bureaucracy out with the scope of the review :</b>	
Steps Already Taken	Next Steps
<p>FCCS has taken the following steps specifically to reduce workload in schools:</p> <p><b>A   <u>New Systems/Processes - Introduced</u></b></p> <p>Primary Centralised Admissions - Introduce</p> <p>(i)   <u>Supply Teachers</u> - Centralised booking system established.</p> <p>(ii)   <u>Supply Teachers</u> - HR paperwork reduced by 50%.</p> <p>(iii)   <u>Temporary Teachers Payroll</u> - New moved to 'auto pay' system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>

Steps Already Taken & Improvements Made to Help Reduce Workload and Bureaucracy within Schools	Next Steps
<p>(iv) <u>Payroll Verification Process (Primary)</u> - moved to centralised system.</p> <p>(v) <u>Primary Schools Admissions</u> - now centralised process and system</p> <p>(vi) <u>Lone Working Systems</u> - introduced.</p> <p>(vii) <u>Driver Checks</u> - management process introduced.</p> <p>(viii) <u>Winter Plan (Bad Weather)</u> - Guidance booklet/ procedures reviewed, updated and issued annually.</p> <p>(ix) <u>Out of Hours Centrally Managed Cover/Response System Introduced</u> - this saved headteachers having to find staff to respond to alarm activations, school winter checks when schools are closed during October and Christmas breaks.</p> <p>(x) <u>Centralised Lets</u> (inc Cover) Booking System introduced.</p> <p>(xi) <u>Provision of General Risk Assessments</u> - guidance and pro forma templates have been agreed.</p> <p>(xii) <u>Nursery Application Management System</u> - now centralised</p> <p>(xiii) <u>Monitored e-mails and communications from the centre to schools to avoid trivial emails being sent and to eliminate duplication</u> - centralised</p> <p><b>B <u>Provision of General Risk Assessment</u></b></p> <p>(i) <u>Nursery Admissions System (NAMS)</u> - working to circulate centrally managed system.</p> <p>(ii) <u>Co-ordination of Janitorial Provision</u> - Further work is ongoing currently to try to introduce a centrally based post to oversee and manage all janitorial and caretaking arrangements across schools and other properties.</p>	