

Educational Institute of Scotland

Submission to Education and Skills Committee on the Scottish Government's Priorities for Education Spending

1. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), Scotland's largest education union, welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission as part of the Committee's consideration of the Scottish Government's priorities for Education spending in the context of the draft budget.
2. The Audit Scotland Schools 2014 Report stated that "In 2012/13, councils spent £4.8 billion on education, of which £4 billion was provided through the block grant." It is clear, therefore, that Scottish Government sets the limit for the vast majority of school funding.
3. The EIS has repeatedly rejected the policy of austerity in public finances- i.e. fiscal consolidation with public spending cuts. This EIS believes firmly that there should be greater public spending generally, and on Education specifically, with a return to this being protected through ring-fencing.
4. The EIS recognises that UK public sector spending decisions have limited significantly the expenditure available to Scottish Government but notes that it has not used its powers significantly to vary taxation to increase revenue for adequate investment in public services. The EIS is of the view that this reticence needs to be reviewed in light of the additional taxation powers now available to the Scottish Parliament, with a view to exploring options around the use of new fiscal powers to support enhanced public sector provision, including additional protected funding for Education.
5. A recent SPICe Briefing on Local Government finance reveals that the proportion of Scottish Government spending on local government has been on a downwards trend in recent years: "Between 2008-09 and 2016-17 the Local Government budget decreased 4.0 percentage points more than the Scottish Government budget." The EIS is concerned with this trend and its ongoing detrimental impact on the ability of councils to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of all children and young people.
6. A Local Government Benchmarking Framework Report published on the Public Finances' website (which is associated with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)), analyses Education spending between 2010-11 and 2015-16 and concludes that local government's relative share of the Scottish budget has fallen: "Across the period of the

LGBF, total current spending by Scottish councils has reduced by 11% in real terms from £17.18 billion to £15.30 billion.”

7. The Report also considers the change in real terms funding per pupil group between 2010-11 and 2015-16, showing that the funding per primary pupil decreased by 9.2% and by 2.2% in the same period for secondary pupils.
8. The EIS recognises that some additional funding has been made available to schools through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) and the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). Whilst this resource is welcome, it is not universal; it is focused on a specific policy objective of addressing the impact of poverty (one which the EIS shares); and both funds are clearly intended to be additional spending streams. It is inappropriate, therefore, to factor PEF and SAC funding into consideration of core funding and budget allocations to Education.
9. The EIS would also take issue with the Cabinet Secretary’s emphasis on Headteacher decision-making on the allocation of PEF. In making the original announcements around the fund, the Cabinet Secretary stated that suggested that the funds would be spent at the discretion of teachers and headteachers. The EIS agreed that teachers should be engaged in such decisions- providing their knowledge of which children and young people required additional support, advising on appropriate interventions, and participating in the evaluation of impact. On the basis of those initial statements, and in adherence to the Collegiality Code of Practice, the EIS issued advice to members on PEF funding, to that effect. We are therefore disappointed that the emphasis within the Cabinet Secretary’s letter to the Committee deviates from the original publicity.
10. The 2011 Pay and Conditions Agreement provided a protection on teacher numbers. However, it is important to note the following statistics: In 2007 there were 692,215 pupils and 55,100 teachers, in 2011 the figures were 670,511 pupils (a 3% reduction) and 51,368 teachers (a 7% reduction); and in 2016 the figures were 684,415 pupils (a 1% reduction) and 50,970 teachers (7.5% reduction).
11. According to Government figures, the teacher-pupil ratio was 13.2 in 2007, 13.4 in 2011 and 13.7 in 2016. The ratio in primary schools has increased from 16.1 in 2011 to 16.6 in 2016. Clearly, this is a matter of deep concern: at a time of great ambition to ‘close’ the poverty-related attainment and achievement gap, and with the expectation of more progressive, learner-centred pedagogies and supports, and legislation which promises entitlements to individualised support that is specific to need, the system needs more, not fewer, qualified teachers, and smaller,

not bigger class sizes. The EIS would urge that serious consideration is given by the Scottish Government to such tensions in the context of setting budget priorities.

12. The Cabinet Secretary, rightfully, cites the expansion of early education and childcare as a key priority in the coming years. However, it is important to be aware of the backdrop against which such expansion is being planned. Since the removal of the statutory requirement that local authority nurseries employ qualified nursery teachers on a 1 to 20 minimum ratio basis, and the introduction of the diluted requirement merely to provide 'access to a teacher', the number of ELC teachers (GTCS registered early learning & childcare/ nursery teachers) dropped by 39% between 2005 and 2015, the child to teacher ratio sitting at 1 to 94.
13. Research conducted by the Child's Curriculum Group on the role and contribution of GTCS registered teachers in Scotland, published in 2016, highlighted that nationally, 25.7% of children aged 3-5 have no access to a teacher; 50% of local authorities state that children do not have equal access to a teacher; 50% of local authorities have no minimum stipulation of teachers' contact time with children; only 12 of Scotland's 32 local authorities continue to employ full-time teachers in each of their Early Years establishments.
14. The EIS believes this is as a direct consequence of funding cuts to this area of the education service despite the widely evidenced understanding that investment in high quality early years education, delivered by highly and appropriately qualified graduates (teachers who specialise in nursery education fit this category in Scotland), is fundamental to reducing inequality of educational and, indeed, lifelong outcomes.
15. With this in mind, the EIS would wish to see the Scottish Government direct some of the additional resource for early years expansion such that early learners of the 3-18 curriculum are afforded a statutory minimum access to a qualified teacher whose skills and training specifically in the areas of child learning and development, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and additional support needs, in the interests of high quality, equitable experiences and outcomes for all of Scotland's early learners.
16. We note that the DFM's correspondence with the Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee outlining how the government will be prioritising additional support for learning, refers largely to legislation, regulation and consultation. There are no additional resources attached to this array of guidance. Scotland has excellent legislation regarding meeting additional support needs, but expansive, progressive and

inclusive legislation cannot be implemented without the necessary resources to underpin delivery in the classroom.

17. Children in Scotland, rightly, can expect support for many reasons, but this range of needs requires a resource-rich learning environment which can augment excellent universal provision with specialist inputs as needed, e.g. EAL services, nurture rooms, educational psychology services, or dyslexia software.
18. Whilst the Scottish Government's narrative regarding commitment to ASN is impressive, delivery on the ground of inclusive education is compromised by scarce resources. The figures on ASN teacher numbers tell their own story.
19. Between 2012 and 2016 (per teacher census data) the number of staff categorised as 'Additional support needs auxiliary or care assistant' in primary schools has been relatively static. There were only 5 more of these staff in 2016 than in 2012.
20. The number of teachers with ASL as their main subject fell by 166 between 2007 and 2016, a fall of 5.4%. The reduction since 2009, when the number of such teachers peaked, is starker – a fall of 14.8%. ASN teacher numbers also fell in 16 out of Scotland's 32 local authorities over the period 2007 to 2016.
21. These staffing reductions have occurred against a backdrop of a rising number of children being identified as having ASN, and increasing numbers of children presenting with complex social, emotional, behavioural and mental health issues. In 2016, 170,329 pupils (24.9% of all pupils), were identified as having additional support needs and 95% spent at least some of their time in mainstream classes, whereas in 2011, the overall number was 98,523. The increase over those five years is 73%.
22. Yet between 2012 and 2016, the number of 'Behaviour Support' staff in primaries declined from 45 to 19, a decline of 58%. In secondary schools, the figures also show decline – 20% fewer ASN assistants and 4% fewer Behaviour Support staff. (ASN assistants are down from 1,859 to 1,485). Cuts to English as an Additional Language services are also of concern. As one might expect, this issue is particularly acute in areas of the country where there have been significantly high levels of migration of families for whom English is an additional language.
23. Similarly alarming is the reduction in educational psychological services. The number of educational psychologists practising in Scotland fell by 10% in the three years from 2012 to 2015. There were 370 trained

educational psychologists practising in Scottish local authorities in 2015 - 10% fewer than the 411 practising in 2012. These staff provide valuable support to children with additional needs and can be of assistance to teachers in meeting children's diverse needs. Reduced funding for EP training is likely to be a factor in this erosion.

24. This array of cuts casts local authorities' increased funding on ASN between 2012 and 2016 in a new light. The increase in funds has not paralleled the increase in the range and complexity of need, and must be critically evaluated.
25. Regarding the extension of rights under the ASL Act for eligible children, this is broadly welcome, but it remains unclear whose responsibility it will be to ensure that pupils are made aware of their rights. If this role is to be fulfilled by schools, there will need to be investment of time and resources to support this, and again we would caution against extending rights without investing to enable the realisation of those rights.
26. Likewise, the revised 'Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice' and new strategies and guidance on e.g. learning provision for children and young people with complex ASN; outcomes for Traveller children; healthcare needs in schools etc all require resource to enable them to become meaningful in practice.
27. We strongly welcome the commitment to increased access to high quality learning for practitioners, as members consistently tell us that this is needed, and our own provision of Professional Learning on ASN matters is vastly over-subscribed, but again this cannot be delivered without budgets.
28. The EIS is strongly opposed to the establishment of an Education Workforce Council (EWC). We have no objection to the creation of professional bodies to support the professionalism of other groups of education workers but strongly object to the proposal for the disbandment of teachers' own professional body- the General Teaching Council of Scotland- the merging of its functions with a non-teacher professional body, and the accompanying erosion of the principles of democracy which underpin the governance of the GTCS. (Please see attached briefing paper).
29. The EIS notes the comments of the Cabinet Secretary regarding Developing the Young Workforce. While the EIS recognises efforts made to expand college- based learning for senior phase pupils, we have concerns about overall cuts to college budgets, and the particular impacts

that this has had on the availability of part-time courses and on ASN provision.

30. The EIS welcomes the range of pathways that have been and are being developed for senior phase learners but reiterate that urgent action is required to tackle the workload, particularly in this regard, of Pupil Support teachers, whose role is to support young people in their future education and career choices. There is simply not enough time to spend with individual young people and their families in this vital area; nor is it reasonable to expect that the level of service required can be delivered by Pupil Support teachers whose caseloads often exceed 200 and who are overloaded with the associated bureaucracy.
31. In addition, the EIS would stress that consideration must be given to professional learning for the appropriate staff on the senior phase curriculum offer. Teachers must be given time and opportunity to become aware of what the options are, of how to access them and how best to support young people in making such important life decisions.