



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

**Report on a fact-finding visit to Scotland,
October 2013**

*Agreed by the Committee for Education on 16 October 2013
Report: NIA 143/11-15 (Committee for Education)*

Committee for Education Remit, Powers and Membership

Powers

The Committee for Education is a Statutory Departmental Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48 of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Committee has power to:

- Consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- Consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of primary legislation;
- Call for persons and papers;
- Initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- Consider and advise on any matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of Education.

Membership

The Committee has 11 members including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and a quorum of 5. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)

Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)^{1 2}

Michaela Boyle

Jonathan Craig

Jo-Anne Dobson

Chris Hazzard⁴

Trevor Lunn

Stephen Moutray⁶

Robin Newtown⁷

Pat Sheehan⁵

Sean Rogers³

¹ With effect from 31 January 2012 Mr Mike Nesbitt replaced Mr David McNarry as Deputy Chairperson

² With effect from 17 April 2012 Mr Danny Kinahan replaced Mr Mike Nesbitt as Deputy Chairperson

³ With effect from 23 April 2012 Mr Sean Rogers replaced Mr Conall McDevitt

⁴ With effect from 10 September 2012 Mr Chris Hazzard replaced Mr Phil Flanagan

⁵ With effect from 10 September 2012 Mr Pat Sheehan replaced Mr Daithi McKay

⁶ With effect from 16 September 2013 Mr Stephen Moutray replaced Miss Brenda Hale

⁷ With effect from 16 September 2013 Mr Robin Newton replaced Miss Michelle McIlveen

Background

On Wednesday 2 October and Thursday 3 October, Members from the Committee for Education undertook a fact-finding visit to Edinburgh and the surrounding area.

The following Members were in attendance:

- Mr Mervyn Storey MLA - Chairperson
- Mr Danny Kinahan MLA - Deputy Chairperson
- Mr Chris Hazzard MLA - Member
- Mr Trevor Lunn MLA - Member
- Mr Seán Rogers MLA - Member

Lasswade Centre

The new Lasswade Centre, opened in August 2013, brings together services previously offered within a school, sports centre, leisure centre, town hall and community centre into one purpose built centre.

The co-location model benefits both the school and community by allowing access to a wider range of facilities to both groups; and it allows the council to maximise the use of its assets by dovetailing the use of the facilities to ensure that the spaces are being used consistently through the day and evening. There are also a number of emerging social benefits.

The Scottish Government contributed c£21.3m in capital grant funding towards the cost of the c£36.6m project as part of the Scottish Futures Trust (similar to the Strategic Investment Board). The remainder funding has been provided through Midlothian Council, based on a revenue model. The project was delivered within the agreed budget and timeframes.

Members met the following:

- Gary Sheret - Midlothian Council;
- Maurice McCann - Midlothian Council;
- Steven Carroll - Cooper Cromar Architects;
- Rosemary Mitchell - Deputy Head Teacher, Lasswade High School;
- Andy Dailly - Policy Manager, Scotland's Schools for the Future Programme, Scottish Government;
- Sara Lightbody - Senior Policy Adviser, Scottish Government; and

- Lucy Carmichael - Policy Officer, Scottish Government.



Committee with Ms Rosemary Mitchell, Deputy Head Lasswade High School and representatives from Midlothian Council and the Scottish Government

During the meeting and subsequent tour of the facilities Members discussed the following:

- Roles and responsibilities of the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Scottish Futures Trust in the funding and delivery of the project;
- The funding model including lessons learned from previous PPP new-build schemes and developing a common approach between local authorities to issues like the standardisation of classroom sizes;
- The consultation process with user groups, which continued throughout construction until after the building opened;
- The focus on a community building with an educational component; including legal and logistical barriers to improving community access to school buildings;
- The use of a HubCo model for procurement; the inclusion of community benefit clauses within contracts; and the savings achieved in the procurement of furniture through collaboration with another school;
- The disbursement of revenue streams, including incentives to maximise community use of facilities;
- School layout including open classrooms; interactive space; and toilet facilities.



Mr Mervyn Storey MLA, Chairperson of the Committee for Education with Ms Rosemary Mitchell, Deputy Head Lasswade High School

Dalkeith Schools Community Campus

The Dalkeith Schools Community Campus (DSCC) was built in 2003. It consists of three schools: Dalkeith High School, St. David's High School and Saltersgate School (Special Educational Needs School). The DSCC was built by BAM PPP at a cost of £30.7m, whilst BM FM provide the Facilities Management and Maintenance under a PPP contract.

The DSCC is designed with shared facilities, such as dining and assembly, community and leisure facilities at the centre with the three schools built out from this main hub. Both high schools have similar layouts in that they are two storeys, made up of three separate finger type blocks off a main circulation route, which allows pupils to be dispersed evenly over a large area, throughout the school day. The high schools share a central access and car park.

Saltersgate, being a school which facilitates special education needs pupils from 5-18 years, is self-contained with its own access, car park and play areas. It is single storey, and linked to the leisure facilities with its own circulation and changing areas.

The facilities also have extensive community use, with community access from 7am - 9am and 6pm - 10pm Monday to Friday during term time, and from 7am - 10pm outside of term time and at weekends.

Members were accompanied by the Scottish Government officials and met the following individuals who provided a tour of each school facility:

- Mr Steven Kelly, Senior Deputy Head, Dalkeith High School
- Mr Martin Sangster, Acting Deputy Head, St. David's High School

Following the tour Members met the Head Teachers of each of the three schools in the campus. Members discussed a number of matters during the tour and subsequent meeting including:

- the opportunity for sharing between the two high schools and the extent to which sharing occurs;
- the merit of using PPP contracts for this type of facility and the importance of flexibility within contracts;
- the challenge in defining the community which DSCC serves, and how the effectiveness of the policy to ensure community use is assessed;
- Free School Meal entitlement and other ways to measure local deprivation.



Members with senior staff representatives from Dalkeith High School, St. David's RC High School and Saltersgate School

STEM in Scottish Schools

In November 2008 the Scottish Government published a strategic framework, Science for Scotland, to encourage more effective educational approaches and greater public engagement with science, engineering and technology. Following a School Science Summit in 2009, attended by representatives of higher education, local authorities and teachers, a Science and Engineering Action Plan to promote young people's awareness and experience of science, engineering and technology within Curriculum for Excellence was launched in March 2010.

The Scottish Government supports teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by funding the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC) and the four Science Centres in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, all of which provide CPD among other functions.

The Science and Engineering Education Advisory Group (SEEAG) was established to review the Science and Engineering Action Plan and advise the Scottish Government on the development of the teaching and learning of science.

SEEAG published its report 'Supporting Scotland's STEM Education and Culture' in January 2012. The report and the Scottish Government's response can be found at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE/Science/SEEAG>.

The successor organisation for SEEAG is STEMEC (STEM Education Committee).

The Committee met:

- Professor Colin Graham, STEMEC
- Barbara Morton, Team Leader, STEM and Social Studies/Global Citizens, Scottish Government.

Members discussed the following during their meeting:

- challenges faced by a teaching population of generalists, including a low science skill and knowledge base;
- the importance of career long professional training, and the challenges presented by a discipline like science which can evolve quickly;
- the development of primary school clusters for STEM in Scottish schools, and building learning communities;
- linkages with Universities to promote CPD;

- the opportunities presented by a funded schools industry liaison officer in SSERC;
- the opportunities for the flexibility in assessment to dovetail with industry requirements, including the introduction of the Advanced Higher assessment and the avoidance of assessment driven learning;
- the challenge of inspiring and motivating pupils to be interested in STEM subjects;
- the use of teacher-mentors and the challenge of encouraging a focus on science within primary schools, and in particular small rural schools;
- gender balance issues regarding a tendency for girls to choose biological science pathways, with boys generally choosing pathways oriented towards physics and maths;
- strength of inter-disciplinary learning and concerns about equity of access.



Members with Professor Colin Graham, STEMEC

Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education

Members hosted dinner for the former Chair of the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education (the Commission) and a number of former Commission members.

The Commission was established to:

- Review the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and its application;
- Examine how the delivery of rural education can maximize attainment and outcomes to give pupils the best life chances, and to examine, where appropriate, how this can be applied more widely;
- Make recommendations on how to reflect best practice on the delivery of all aspects of education in rural areas (pre-school through to higher and further education)
- Examine links between rural education and the preservation, support and development of rural communities, and to make recommendations on how these links might be strengthened if necessary; and
- Examine and make recommendations on funding issues surrounding rural education.

The report was published in April 2013, and in its June response, the Scottish Government committed to implementing the majority of the recommendations. Both the report and response can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Review/CommissionRuralEducation>.

Members met the following:

- Sherriff David Sutherland, Commission Chairperson;
- Councillor Peter MacKenzie (East Lothian), Commission Member;
- Councillor Terry Loughran (Inverclyde), Commission Member;
- Peter Ferguson (Headteacher, Auchterhouse Primary School, Angus), Commission Member;
- Clare Morley, Curriculum Unit, Scottish Government and formerly Commission Secretariat.

Members discussed the following:

- definition of a strategic school;
- the implementation of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 including consistency of decision making across local authority areas, the Ministerial 'call-in' process, and the proposals for adjudication;

- the use of the educational benefit criteria in favour of other measures like financial sustainability;
- the number of excess school places in Scotland; and
- maintenance issues within the Scottish schools estate.

Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages

On Thursday morning Members met with Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages and MSP for the Western Isles along with the following Scottish Government Officials:

- Clare Morley, Curriculum Unit, Scottish Government and formerly Secretariat to the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education;
- Barbara Morton, Team Leader, STEM and Social Studies/Global Citizens, Scottish Government;
- Michelle Wallace - Policy Officer, Scottish Government; and
- Lucy Carmichael - Policy Officer, Scottish Government.



Members with Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages

During the meeting Members discussed the following matters with the Minister:

- proposed amendments to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 to clarify matters around closure;
- the Ministerial 'call-in' process and the proposals for an independent adjudication panel;

- the potential economic and community impact of a school closure including consideration of the impact on local families if a glen or island is left without a local primary school;
- the merit of conducting research once a school has closed to measure the impact on the local community;
- definition of a rural school and a strategic school;
- the importance of leadership within schools in addressing disadvantage;
- equivalence and acceptability of Scottish qualifications for entrance to third level education in the rest of the UK, and internationally;
- measurement of social deprivation in schools including the Scottish index of multiple deprivation;
- placing successful headteachers in 'coasting schools' to facilitate improvement;
- the value placed on the independence of the inspectorate in Scotland, with Education Scotland seen to be a supporting body;
- inspection deemed to be based on the school, rather than individual teachers and is based on the circumstances in which the school finds itself.
- flexibility of school starting age
- challenge of improving teacher confidence regarding the teaching of STEM subjects.

Committee for Education and Culture

The Scottish Committee for Education and Culture scrutinises the policies and performance of the Scottish Government and its agencies by considering relevant legislation; conducting inquiries; scrutinising spending proposals; and carrying out any other work that it considers appropriate.

Members met the following Members of the Committee for Education and Culture over lunch

- Stewart Maxwell, MSP for West Scotland, Convenor;
- Clare Adamson, MSP for Central Scotland, Member;
- Liam McArthur, MSP for South Scotland, Member.

Members discussed the following:

- the remit and role of the Committee for Education and Culture;
- engagement and interaction with stakeholders with regard to Committee decision-making;
- equivalence and portability of Scottish qualifications;
- the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education in the context of the Area Planning Process currently underway locally;



Members with Stewart Maxwell MSP, Convenor of the Committee for Education and Culture and Liam McArthur MSP, Member of the Committee for Education and Culture

Scottish Qualifications Authority

Finally Members met with officials from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the national accreditation and awarding body in Scotland. In its accreditation role SQA accredits vocational qualifications offered across Scotland, including Scottish Vocational Qualifications, and approves awarding bodies that wish to award them.

As an awarding body, SQA works with schools, colleges, universities, industry, and government, to provide high quality, flexible and relevant qualifications. It strives to ensure that qualifications are inclusive and accessible to all, that they recognise the achievements of learners, and that they provide clear pathways to further learning or employment.

Members met the following officials:

- Dr Janet Brown, Chief Executive, SQA
- Dr Gill Stewart, Director of Qualifications Development, SQA
- Aileen Hollywood, Development Officer, Curriculum Planning, Education Scotland
- Sara Lightbody, Senior Policy Advisor, Qualifications, Scottish Government.

SQA officials outlined the roles and responsibilities of the organisation and discussed a number of issues with Members including:

- importance of engaging with UCAS and third level institutions to ensure portability of qualifications
- the merits of a modular vs. linear approach to assessment including combining both approaches;
- the benefits of removing league tables whilst retaining accountability;
- the benefit of a single examination authority, including the lack of incentive to manipulate grades, and the opportunity of buy-in from teachers;
- breadth of opportunity presented to young people through Highers;
- involvement of business in the development of the Curriculum for Excellence, including a self-reflection component
- Scottish literacy and numeracy certificates geared towards the level of learning rather than assessed at a specific age.
- the introduction of new technologies in teaching and the impact on the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence;
- the lack of a resit mechanism for modules within the Scottish education system;
- development of a 'life skills' qualification for numeracy and literacy;
- the benefits of having the awarding body and the regulator within one organisation.

A link to the Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future publication is provided:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/09/22154600/0>

Appended is the following information from the Scottish Government:

- a summary note on Scottish qualifications; and
- a leaflet on the Curriculum for Excellence.