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| <b>Report To:</b>       | <b>Education &amp; Communities Committee</b>   | <b>Date:</b>       | <b>19 March 2024</b>   |
| <b>Report By:</b>       | <b>Ruth Binks<br/>Corporate Director Education,<br/>Communities and Organisational<br/>Development</b> | <b>Report No:</b>  | <b>EDUCOM/15/24/MR</b> |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b> | <b>Michael Roach<br/>Head of Education</b>   | <b>Contact No:</b> | <b>01475 712891</b>    |
| <b>Subject:</b>         | <b>Education Update Report – Overview of Local and National Initiatives</b>                            |                    |                        |

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## **1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to ask members of the Education and Communities Committee to note updates relating to the Education Service both in terms of local development as well as national policy development

1.3 The report includes update on:

- Independent Review of Qualifications and assessment
- Education and skills reform
- Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)
- Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs)
- PISA Results 2022
- Systematic improvement curriculum cycle
- Digital learning
- Secondary GME update
- Teacher numbers update
- Inverclyde STEM Festival
- Education projects re vaping

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to:

- note the content of the update report

**Ruth Binks**  
**Corporate Director, Education, Communities & Organisational Development**

### **3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

#### **3.1 Independent Review of Qualifications and assessment**

The Scottish Government is underway with a detailed examination of the proposals and have ensured that a range of partners, including schools and colleges, have had the opportunity to shape their response.

Teacher voice is key in the reform process and a survey was issued to all schools and colleges seeking views on the reports from the National Discussion and Professor Hayward. The online survey ran between July and October 2023 and received 2,152 responses – 61% were from individuals and 39% (835) were from groups. In total, the group responses represent the views of around 9,328 people.

Views from the survey indicate that almost all wish to see some change to qualifications and assessment. Whilst some are very supportive of the proposals, others favour a much more incremental approach to change.

Many respondents state that reducing the number of examinations in the senior phase is “an immediate priority” however there is no clear view with regards to the proposal to remove external assessment at National 5.

A full analysis of this survey will be published in due course.

The Cabinet Secretary has committed to return to Parliament early this year to fully debate the proposals and will provide a Scottish Government response in due course.

#### **3.2 Education and skills reform**

On Education Reform legislation, the consultation announced in November closed on 18 December. In addition to the formal consultation responses, engagement sessions were held with over 900 teachers, practitioners, and others from across education. As Committee are aware from the January 2024 update report, the Education Service submitted a response to this.

The Cabinet Secretary subsequently provided evidence on Education Reform to the Scottish Parliament’s Education, Children and Young People Committee on 17 January, covering a number of areas, including:

- The budgetary context following Scottish Government’s Budget statement in December.
- Importance of delivering reform in a way which continues progress, achieves outcomes for learners, teachers, practitioners, and others but which does not exacerbate existing pressures on the system.
- Continued importance of engagement with the teaching profession.
- Role and work of Scottish Government, local authorities, and national bodies around improvement.
- Opportunities for the New Qualifications Body around working with teachers and others throughout the system on qualifications development.

The Cabinet Secretary has emphasised the establishment of the Centre for Teaching Excellence as central to the Scottish Government’s national mission to close the attainment gap and deliver truly excellent learning and teaching to all children.

It is anticipated the Centre will be hosted by a University, learning from the successful model of the Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection (CELCIS).

The overarching functions of the Centre will be co-designed with stakeholders across the education sector.

This work is due to get underway shortly and the Scottish Government look forward to continuing discussions with colleagues throughout local government as we move through the co-design process.

The Scottish Government has confirmed it will provide a total of £3million funding support to the RICs over the 2024/25 financial year. This is in line with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills' statement to the Scottish Parliament in November 2023, confirming that RIC funding would be tapered as we transition from these funding arrangements.

More broadly on post-school reform, The Minister for Higher and Further Education updated Parliament, 5 December, on next steps including the Scottish Government leading on skills planning, simplifying funding, and taking a central role in the development of apprenticeships. The Minister also discussed the short independent review of community learning being led by Kate Still.

### 3.3 **Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)**

PEF is additional funding allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Publicly funded primary, secondary and special schools will receive £1,225 in 2023/24 for each child in P1 to S3, or equivalent, who is registered for free school meals under national eligibility criteria.

The Education Service recognises the need to maximise the use of PEF to support establishments plan effectively for those children, young people and families who are impacted by poverty. The local authority has revisited its PEF review process, and this has resulted in updated PEF guidance and has introduced more collaborative approaches to strengthen its use. The local authority has also established a financial and quality assurance process to promote the use of PEF within the academic year. New PEF planning templates have been created and schools now outline how they meaningfully engage with stakeholders. Participatory budgeting is also being used in almost all schools to support the decision-making around the cost of the school day.

All PEF plans are reviewed, and feedback is provided at the start of each session via the Cycle for Improvement communication proforma. Continued tracking of establishment funds is ongoing throughout the session with School Business Officers and increased opportunities to share PEF approaches at Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) Head Teachers meetings strengthen the approach. Improved tracking of the impact of PEF plans has also been evident through the sampling of plans and the information presented in each establishments Standard and Quality report.

Robust tracking of the fund at establishment and Local Authority level has led to a significant reduction in the underspend from the last 2 sessions to the point where investment by some schools is recorded at over 100% of their total available PEF for the 2022/23 financial and academic year, with the overall investment over this period at 102% of the total PEF available. Schools have been supported to carefully manage their interventions without disruption due to pay awards and to consider that the timing of these interventions may well be shorter as a result.

The reasons for the identified overspends are:

- Timing – Financial Year end v Academic Year end
- Pay awards increasing salaries
- Planned overspend from a couple of schools to embed interventions

We are confident that through robust tracking and monitoring the future planning action to bring the totality of planned spend within budget for the agreed end of the project is in place.

We expect national data on PEF spending to be published during Wk beginning 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

### 3.4 **Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs)**

The parliamentary announcement on 7<sup>th</sup> November of the Scottish Government's plans to taper funding to the Regional Improvement Collaboratives in 2024-25 and stop funding thereafter has initiated an internal review of the structure and work of the West Partnership (WP). In February, confirmation of 50% funding for the session 2025-26 and no funding thereafter, has allowed the West Partnership team to begin finalising their scenario planning to ensure the continuing of highly effective programmes and networks on the 50% funding for the coming year. A priority will be working with school staff and central officers to build a more established and effective networked learning system to ensure the continuation of programmes and networks when there is no WP core team or funding.

Directors and Chief Education Officers have agreed the initial scenario plans in principle. More detailed plans will be brought to the Board Meeting in March 2024. This included changes to staffing of the WP Core Team and noting the impact of reduced funding which had previously supported several central officers from local authorities who worked regionally for some or part of their working week.

The impact of the reduced funding and planning thereafter will then be tabled for discussion at the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May and to be discussed with Local Authority Education Committees as appropriate.

### 3.5 **PISA Results 2022**

The PISA 2022 results were published on 5 December 2023. PISA measures 15 year olds' abilities in Mathematics, Reading and Science, with assessments taking place across 81 countries/economies across the world. In Scotland, assessments took place in October and November 2022, with over 3,000 pupils participating from 117 schools.

The results showed the impact of the pandemic and school building closures internationally and in Scotland. Scotland's scores in Mathematics and Reading were lower than in 2018, while Science was similar in 2022 compared to 2018 (the same trends seen for the OECD average). Scotland's score in Reading was above the OECD average, and similar to the OECD average in Mathematics and Science (which was the same as in PISA 2018). PISA also asks pupils to take part in a student questionnaire, which included questions around experiences of school building closures, attitudes to learning, experiences at school, and wellbeing. The report on Scotland's PISA results can be accessed here: [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA 2022\): Scotland's results - highlights - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/collections/documents/Programme-for-International-Student-Assessment-(PISA-2022)-Scotland-s-results-highlights-gov.scot)

On 12 December the Cabinet Secretary made a statement to Parliament covering both the PISA and ACEL (Achievement for Curriculum for Excellence Levels) results as well as a range of other areas including attendance rates, teacher numbers and behaviour schools. This was followed up on 13 December by a debate by the Conservatives regarding "Improving the Performance of the Scottish Education System."

The Field Trial for the PISA 2025 assessments will take place in 40 schools in Scotland in March 2024. Thank to you Directors who have supported recruitment of schools. The PISA 2025 assessments will take place in September and October 2025.

<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

### 3.6 **Systematic improvement curriculum cycle**

As part of the [Cabinet Secretary's Statement from December 2023](#) in relation to the 2022 PISA results and ACEL publication covering academic year 2022/23, it was announced that there will be a Curriculum Improvement Cycle. The new cycle relates back to an initial [OECD 2021 report](#) recommendation as follows:

*“Recommendation 3.4 Develop a systematic approach to curriculum review. Scotland could consider establishing a systematic curriculum review cycle with a planned timeframe and specific review agenda, led by the specialist stand-alone agency.”*

The new cycle, which will commence in 2024, will look at curriculum content, the role of knowledge, transitions between primary and secondary and alignment between the broad general education and the senior phase. The improvement cycle will build on initial “pilot curriculum reviews” undertaken in 2023 across a range of subject areas by Education Scotland.

Maths will be the first curricular area to be revised, led by a Maths specialist working alongside the National Response to Improving Mathematics. A national thematic inspection on maths will also be published in autumn 2024. Two schools in Inverclyde will be visited in relation to this.

### 3.7 **Digital learning**

The 2024/25 Scottish Government Budget document set out steps to ensure the public finances remain on a sustainable trajectory, prioritising the Scottish Government’s spending to support their key missions. Included within this it states: “In certain areas in the forthcoming financial year a more targeted approach to the implementation of new policies will ensure the maximum possible value for money. This includes ... investing in targeted device and connectivity provision for our most disadvantaged households with children.”

In order to maximise the impact of funding, the Scottish Government will now seek to provide support at a household level, targeting investment specifically at disadvantaged families with children. This targeted approach will improve equity of access to devices and connectivity for those who need it most, helping families realise the broad range of benefits associated with digital inclusion. It will also enable access not only to digital tools and resources for learning, but to digital society and online public services. Through doing so, it will expand the impact of this investment beyond learners to their wider families. The Scottish Government is currently in the early stages of scheme design with Connecting Scotland, who will use their established model to distribute devices to eligible households.

### 3.8 **Secondary GME progress**

It was agreed at the January committee that a regular update would be given to committee re the progress being made around the inception of our secondary GME provision at Inverclyde Academy.

We are beginning the recruitment process to find a teacher for the post.

The GME webpage updated for Education Services is now up to date and is now dual language: [Gaelic Medium Education - Inverclyde Council](#)

Ongoing communication is in place with parents regarding places at the secondary provision.

### 3.9 **Teacher numbers update**

Further to the January 2024 update report to committee in relation to the need to maintain teacher numbers in the 2023 census in comparison to the 2022 census, where the council had received communication in December 2023 from the Scottish Government relating to the final position for Inverclyde i.e. that there was a 9 FTE teacher less difference between the 2023 census and 2022.

The service responded to the letter with mitigations as to why this difference existed. A response was shared by the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2023. The key factors shared with the Scottish Government are the ongoing tapering down of the Scottish Attainment Challenge funding the authority receives year on year and the spending of the 1140 / Early Years budget which it was agreed we could keep within an EMR and fund projects agreed to by the Scottish Government.

The mitigations were accepted meaning that no funding will be withheld from the council in the next budget settlement.

In a letter from the Cabinet Secretary in February 2024, further information was shared that teacher numbers should be held again in the 2024 census and that the teacher number figures from the 2023 census will be used as the baseline as it was in December 2023. The service expects there to already be a difference given the further tapering down of funding from the Scottish Attainment Challenge in April 2024 will see a further reduction in 15FTE teachers.

### 3.10 **Inverclyde STEM Festival**

Inverclyde Education Services and schools are working with community partners to hold the Inverclyde STEM festival in June 2024.

The STEM festival aims to raise the profile of STEM in Inverclyde and to make links into STEM careers for pupils, families, and community members.

The festival will consist of:

- A Community Event on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2024
- Six satellite Family & Community Events which will be held in each of our six secondary Schools
- All primary schools will have a hands-on workshop with STEM Ambassadors or representatives from Further Education or industry held within each school.

In addition, in collaboration with Inverclyde's Park rangers, six any time access STEM trails will be established.

A grant of £5000 has been secured from the Scottish Government Science Festival Fund and will be used to fund resources, venue costs, the setting up of a website/App and marketing.

### 3.11 **Education projects on vaping**

#### **Vaping Sensor Trial**

A pilot is ongoing in a secondary school to test the effectiveness of vaping sensors placed in toilets. There was success in the sensor detecting pupils vaping in the toilet where the trial sensor was installed and the school has seen a reduction in disposable vapes being found discarded in the school building, since the sensor was installed week beginning 15 January 2024. The pilot identified issues with connection to the Wi-Fi signal in the building and the trial has now been adapted to attempt to resolve the connection issues. Once the trial has concluded, decisions will be taken on whether a roll out can be implemented in the remaining five secondary schools. Funding has been provided for the trial to take place, through the funding provided by HSCP from the NHS funding. Should the trial be successful, funding through this same fund could be provided for further roll out.

#### **Vaping Input in Schools**

Vaping was introduced into the Substance Use Framework (2023/ 24) used by the newly appointed substance officers where they discussed nicotine being a drug. This was highlighted within a video the officers created discussing the 7 types of drugs, including nicotine as a stimulant. During this part of the lesson, the officers discuss the addictiveness and health implications of stimulants, highlighting nicotine specifically.

Vaping is looked at in more detail during the Risky Behaviour lesson where the officers created a vaping specific video that went into great detail about the effects of vaping on individuals. This session is delivered to all S1-6 pupils.

The Scottish Government has recently released their campaign toolkit for their tobacco and vaping framework and this has been shared with schools. The aim of this campaign is not to ask schools to do any extra curriculum activity around vaping, but this toolkit should help schools to have conversations and help pupils gain a better understanding of the risks.

#### 4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

| SUBJECT   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Financial   |     | X  |
| Legal/Risk  |     | X  |
| Human Resources   |     | X  |
| Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)                                     |     | X  |
| Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing |     | X  |
| Environmental & Sustainability  |     | X  |
| Data Protection   |     | X  |

#### 4.2 Finance

N/A.

Annual recurring costs (savings)

| Cost Centre | Budget Heading | With Effect from | Annual Net Impact | Virement From (If Applicable) | Other Comments |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
|             |                |                  |                   |                               |                |

#### 4.3 Legal/Risk

N/A.

#### 4.4 Human Resources

N/A.

#### 4.5 Strategic

N/A.

#### 4.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

##### (a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.   |
| N | NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement. |

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed. |
| N | NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.    |

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.   |
| N | NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights. |

**4.7 Environmental/Sustainability**

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.  |
| N | NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented. |

**4.8 Data Protection**

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.                                    |
| N | NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals. |

**5.0 CONSULTATION**

5.1 N/A.

**6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 N/A.