

Response ID ANON-NXJH-8HA9-J

Submitted to **Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: A Governance Review**
Submitted on 2017-01-05 11:18:10

About You

What is your name?

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Humanist Society Scotland

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

Page One

1 What are the strengths of the current governance arrangements of Scottish education?

What are the strengths of the current governance arrangements of Scottish education?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

2 What are the barriers within the current governance arrangements to achieving the vision of excellence and equity for all?

What are the barriers within the current governance arrangements to achieving the vision of excellence and equity for all?:

Humanist Society Scotland is concerned with various elements of the current governance arrangements within Scottish education. The focus of these concerns are the barriers that they create for equality, and equal treatment of learners, carers and staff.

1. Democratic oversight of the education system. Currently all local authorities dispense their responsibilities to provide education in various ways. One strange consequence of the Local Government (Scotland) etc. Act 1973 was that local authorities were required to set-up structures as a consequence of the appointment of unelected 'religious representatives (Moving Forward: Local Government and the Scottish Parliament – The Report of the Commission on Local Government on the Scottish Parliament, The Scottish Executive, June 1999). This representation has been analysed and shown to be vastly unrepresentative of even the religious minority of people in Scotland (HSS Response to petition PE01498: Religious Representatives on Local Authority Education Committees, March 2014). It has been suggested by the Church of Scotland (Newsnight Scotland, 14 October 2013) that local authority education committees should be restructured to allow Humanist, and other non-religious, representation. HSS is completely opposed to this (it would require legislative change anyway, as the current legislation only allows representation from religious organisations with "churches and denominational bodies having duly constituted charges or other regularly appointed places of worship"). HSS believes that the democratic oversight of education governance should be the prime responsibility of duly elected Councillors. As with all other areas of policy, elected representatives may from time-to-time wish to seek advice or views from experts, people with experience in a particular field, or representatives of interested parties - this does not require unelected membership status on a committee.

2. Equality of access. HSS is opposed to maintaining a two-track system of denominational and non-denominational schools. In recent years we have seen an increase in the number of local authorities and denominational schools who require a carer to produce proof of the religiosity of their children (Schools could ask parents to prove their child is Catholic, STV News, 23 August 2016). A recent report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission highlighted the lack of proportionality in the 'approval system' (Education (Scotland) Act 1980) whereby church groups must approve the appointment of staff in schools, and notes that this may breach the EU Employment Equality Directive (Religion or belief: is the law working? EHRC, December 2016).

3 Should the key principles below underpin our approach to reform?

Yes

Are there other principles which should be applied?:

Equality of access should be a guiding principle, and seems to be conspicuously missing from the current list, and definitely from the current governance arrangements of Scottish education.

4 What changes to governance arrangements are required to support decisions about children's learning and school life being taken at school level?

What changes to governance arrangements are required to support decisions about children's learning and school life being taken at school level?:

From our interactions with parents and young people, they cite lack of knowledge about complaint mechanisms to be a barrier about them engaging with areas of the school life. In response to this HSS released a guide aimed to help them (<http://enlightenup.scot/advice/>).

5 What services and support should be delivered by schools? What responsibilities should be devolved to teachers and head teachers to enable this? You may wish to provide examples of decisions currently taken by teachers or headteachers and decisions which cannot currently be made at school level.

What services and support should be delivered by schools? :

Head teachers are currently expected to deliver Religious Observance without clear direction or measurable outcomes open to external inspection.

HSS believes Religious Observance should have no place in the state education system. However, where it remains, it should be linked to the Governance framework so that Head Teachers may know how to evidence the impact of their decisions.

6 How can children, parents, communities, employers, colleges, universities and others play a stronger role in school life? What actions should be taken to support this?

How can children, parents, communities, employers, colleges, universities and others play a stronger role in school life? What actions should be taken to support this?:

HSS recognises the important role the whole community plays in the school life. This should be encouraged on an equitable basis where no one body should have automatic or assumed position on extra-curricular or consultative bodies.

Community engagement should be appropriate to the activity.

Encouraging understanding about the diversity of the communities served by a school should be done in an inclusive way. It should not elevate particular groups such as churches over other parts of society.

Specifically no religious or belief body should have a representative role on parent/teacher consultative bodies.

7 How can the governance arrangements support more community-led early learning and childcare provision particularly in remote and rural areas?

How can the governance arrangements support more community-led early learning and childcare provision particularly in remote and rural areas?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

8 How can effective collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners be further encouraged and incentivised?

How can effective collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners be further encouraged and incentivised?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

9 What services and support functions could be provided more effectively through clusters of schools working together with partners?

What services and support functions could be provided more effectively through clusters of schools working together with partners?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

10 What services or functions are best delivered at a regional level? This may include functions or services currently delivered at a local or a national level.

What services or functions are best delivered at a regional level?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

11 What factors should be considered when establishing new educational regions?

What factors should be considered when establishing new educational regions?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

12 What services or support functions should be delivered at a national level?

What services or support functions should be delivered at a national level?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

13 How should governance support teacher education and professional learning in order to build the professional capacity we need?

How should governance support teacher education and professional learning in order to build the professional capacity we need?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

14 Should the funding formula for schools be guided by the principles that it should support excellence and equity, be fair, simple, transparent, predictable and deliver value for money? Should other principles be used to inform the design of the formula?

Should the funding formula for schools be guided by the principles that it should support excellence and equity, be fair, simple, transparent, predictable and deliver value for money? Should other principles be used to inform the design of the formula?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

15 What further controls over funding should be devolved to school level?

What further controls over funding should be devolved to school level?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

16 How could the accountability arrangements for education be improved?

How could the accountability arrangements for education be improved?:

In respect of the statutory requirement to provide Religious Observance in state schools, specific, measurable outcomes should be set for Head teachers that can be monitored by all Governance tiers locally and nationally.

17 Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the governance of education in Scotland?

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the governance of education in Scotland?:

HSS does not take a view on this.

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.:

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.: