

TEACHER PANEL

AN EMPOWERED SCHOOL SYSTEM: UPDATE

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the actions of the School Empowerment Steering Group including the co-production of empowering schools guidance and a headteachers' charter.
2. Members of the Teacher Panel are invited to review the progress made and consider the questions for discussion.

Background

3. The Education Reform Joint Agreement between the Scottish Government and Local Government published in June 2018, recognises that establishing an empowered system, which includes schools, teachers, pupils and parents, is crucial in improving the life chances of our children and young people.
4. The School Empowerment Steering Group, chaired by Gayle Gorman as Chief Inspector of Education, is tasked with taking this work forward and ensuring that empowerment takes place at all levels of our system. A broad range of bodies are engaged in developing the school empowerment agenda through their representation on the Steering Group. They include national and local government, professional associations, Education Scotland, ADES and other key stakeholders.

Progress

5. Education Scotland has published the first of three national thematic inspections that will gather evidence on school empowerment. The first thematic inspection took place in the autumn term 2018 and the *Readiness for Empowerment* thematic report was published in December 2018. The thematic inspection of curriculum leadership is currently under way.
6. An overarching 'Empowered System' diagram has been developed which identifies key contributors in an empowered system (Annex 1). The diagram will be supported by guidance on what an empowered system means for each of the following eight contributors:
 - School leaders
 - Teachers and practitioners
 - Support staff
 - Parents and carers
 - Learners
 - Partners
 - Local Authority and Regional Improvement Collaborative

- Scottish Government and national organisations

The School Empowerment Steering Group signed off the empowered system diagram, School Leaders guidance (Annex 2) and the Headteachers' Charter (Annex 3) as agreed drafts in January 2018. These were published on Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub on 7 February 2018

[<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/an-empowered-system>]. A letter was sent out to all teachers in Scotland from Gayle Gorman to inform them of this publication and to encourage them to engage with the school empowerment work (Annex 4).

Next Steps

7. The third thematic inspection with a focus on parent and pupil participation will be carried out in the summer term 2019.
8. Agreement has been reached at the School Empowerment Steering Group as to how the additional school empowerment guidance will be developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders. Guidance for each of the additional contributors identified in the empowered system diagram will be developed and published as agreed drafts with a full suite of guidance published later this year.

Questions for Discussion

9. What are the opportunities of the empowering school leaders guidance and Headteachers' Charter for the system?
10. What might the principles for empowerment for teachers and practitioners include?

Learning Directorate
March 2019

ANNEX 1

An Empowered System Diagram

AN EMPOWERED SYSTEM

An empowered system grows stronger and more confident, working in partnership to lead learning and teaching that achieves excellence and equity for all learners. Empowerment and collaboration for improvement happen at all levels of the system.



ANNEX 2

Empowering School Leaders Guidance – Agreed Draft as Published

Introduction

Scotland has started a collective endeavour to build an empowered, connected, self-improving education system to achieve excellence and equity for all children and young people as set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF).

School leadership is a key driver for improvement. Evidence from the OECD and elsewhere demonstrates that leaders, at all levels, who are empowered and collaborative, and who empower others, are well placed to ensure the highest quality of learning and teaching.

In an empowered school-led system, school leaders should be part of the collective leadership of the system, as well as leaders within their own organisation. The leadership skills required include: working across organisational boundaries; building shared values and trust; drawing on a wide range of perspectives and resources across systems to design local solutions; and reflecting local context, communities and aspirations.

Effective school leaders support cultures that welcome and foster teacher agency, supporting and enabling collaborative professionalism, including teacher-led professional learning.

As school leaders build upon and extend the foundations already in place, our system will move towards the shared ambition of excellence and equity for all Scotland's children and young people.

Principles

The following principles support the culture of empowering school leaders.

School leaders should:

- Be adaptive and creative in their approach to leading learning and teaching and developing learner pathways that meet the needs of all learners.
- Be collaborative and collegiate in their approach, encouraging and seeking views from across the learning community – from parents, children and young people, teachers and support staff, partners, other schools and the Local Authority.
- Be active partners in multi-agency working to get it right for every child.
- Support, encourage and facilitate children and young people's participation in decisions about their own learning and the life of the learning community.
- Seek to develop trusting relationships with parents and carers and help to foster the home learning environment.

- Be lifelong learners, committed to improving their practice by engaging in professional learning, enquiring collaboratively, engaging in and with research and using evidence-informed practice.
- Make an active and valued contribution to local, regional and national education policy.

The wider education system – including the Scottish Government and Local Authorities – should provide school leaders with the necessary freedom and support to embed these principles in their practice.

ANNEX 3

Headteachers' Charter for School Empowerment – Agreed Draft as Published

Introduction

An empowered system is built on mutual trust, co-operation and highly effective communication. In an empowered system headteachers and Local Authorities are partners, each contributing and supporting each other and respecting the different role each plays.

The role of headteacher is recognised as a distinct leadership position in the General Teaching Council for Scotland's Professional Standards and in national conditions of service. As senior officers of the Local Authority, responsible for the leadership and management of the service provided to children, young people and their families, headteachers are accountable to both their employer and to their learning community for the leadership and management of education within their setting.

The Local Authority has statutory responsibility for the provision and improvement of education in the area. This includes contractual and financial obligations that interact with, and can be dependent upon, decisions made at school level. The Local Authority can intervene in a school-level decision if a statutory, contractual or financial obligation would be breached. Clear processes and mutually respectful and supportive relationships should be in place to minimise the need for such intervention.

In an empowered system Local Authorities add value by enabling key decisions to be made by those who are closest to the educational experience of children and young people, and who best understand the particular context of the learning community. The headteacher is responsible for making such decisions in partnership with their learning community – staff, learners, parents and other partners.

In all localities headteachers and Local Authorities should work in partnership with children, young people and their families to take decisions which reflect the local context. Mutually supportive and respectful relationships should be in place and maintained in order to maximise effective collaboration. Headteachers should lead collaborative, evidence-based decision-making while recognising that they are an integral part of a wider education and children's services system and open to constructive support and challenge by the Local Authority and their colleagues.

In an empowered system, headteachers should lead learning communities to determine the most appropriate approach in the following key areas:

In relation to **leading learning and teaching**, headteachers should:

- Lead collaborative work to co-design and develop the curriculum and learner pathways, including transitions, which best meet the needs of all children and young people. This should take account of the national framework for Scotland's curriculum along with the needs of local context, as agreed between schools and the Local Authority.

- Empower staff to continually improve practice, encouraging professional dialogue, supporting career-long professional learning and collaborative enquiry, and the use of research and evidence-informed practice. Headteachers should model a commitment to lifelong learning through their own practice.
- Lead change and improvement, making decisions in partnership with their learning community about the improvement priorities and plan for their school, reflecting and informing the local improvement plan and the National Improvement Framework.

In relation to **empowering the learning community**, headteachers should:

- Be collaborative and collegiate, enabling staff to lead and co-creating a supportive and empowered culture.
- Work collaboratively with their Parent Council and wider parent forum, encouraging and supporting parents to be involved in the life of the school and in decision-making.
- Support and encourage children and young people to participate in decisions about their own learning and the life of the learning community.
- Promote collaboration for improvement, seeking and building relationships with other schools and partners in order to improve outcomes.
- Be active partners in multi-agency working to get it right for every child and family, working with the Local Authority and other services.
- Champion high quality professional learning for all staff, including supporting students and probationers, and lead by example.
- Actively participate in the wider corporate work of the Local Authority, consistent with their role as leaders of learning and contribute to the Regional Improvement Collaborative – accessing support and working collaboratively to lead improvement.

In relation to **making best use of the school's resources**, headteachers should:

- Manage a delegated budget in a fair, equitable and transparent way, supported by the Local Authority and a fair, transparent and equitable local Devolved School Management Scheme.
- Deploy the school's budget in accordance with best value principles and Local Authority procurement arrangements, with appropriate support and guidance from their Local Authority.

- Play an active role in designing and reviewing recruitment and staffing approaches, both for their own school/s and for the wider Authority.
- Be empowered to design a staffing structure which best supports the school's curriculum and leadership requirements, working within their delegated staffing budget and supported by their Local Authority and SNCT/LNCT agreements and guidance.
- Be integral to the appointment of staff in accordance with the best interests of children and young people and work in partnership with the Local Authority to ensure good practice in recruitment and appointment, in line with SNCT/LNCT agreements and guidance.

Work in partnership with the Local Authority, and within clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, to ensure a highly professional school team is built and sustained to meet the needs of the learning community.

ANNEX 4

Letter from Gayle Gorman to Teachers

8 February 2019

Dear Colleague

Some of you will be aware of the Education Reform - Joint Agreement between the Scottish Government and Local Government (represented by COSLA) published in June 2018. The Joint Agreement recognises that establishing an empowered system, which includes schools, teachers, pupils and parents, is crucial in improving the life chances of our children and young people.

As Chief Inspector of Education, I have the privilege of being the independent chair of the Steering Group tasked to take this work forward, to put in place what is needed to ensure empowerment takes place at all levels of our system. A broad range of bodies are engaged in developing the school empowerment agenda through their representation on the Steering Group. They include national and local government, professional associations, Education Scotland, ADES and other key stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the progress we are making.

The Joint Agreement is based on the key principles that schools are empowered to make the decisions that most affect outcomes for their young people. The rationale is to ensure that decisions that affect learning and teaching are taken as close to the learner as possible, to ensure that needs are met and that impact on learners is high. An empowered system is built on mutual trust, co-operation and highly effective communication. Progress towards empowerment should enable the system to be more responsive, decisive and agile when meeting individual and local needs.

At the heart of this system change is the development of teacher agency and professional voice; and ensuring that professional leadership and reflective practice are the key drivers for Scottish education. Successfully taking forward such an empowerment agenda will require universal engagement.

The empowered system diagram attached recognises all parts of the system – including teachers, learners, parents and carers, support staff and stakeholders who all have a role in delivering an empowered system for all of our young people.

This week we have [published some early work](#) to explain how we envisage an empowered system in Scotland could be supported. We are working towards a suite of guidance and materials for all engaged with education to support the whole system change required to achieve empowerment.

The materials released this week are those under the School Leaders section, and contain jointly agreed materials, including:

- The Headteachers' Charter for School Empowerment, which sets out the key elements of the role of headteachers in an empowered system; and
- Principles for School Leaders, which support the culture of empowering school leaders.

This section will be further developed with examples of effective practice through the coming year. These materials should give everyone a flavour of the approach being adopted around this agenda.

Work is under way to populate the other sections of the document, involving practitioners, consultation groups, working parties and collaborative events being organised to ensure support and guidance is available to all.

An empowered system will grow stronger and more confident when we work in partnership to achieve it. We must ensure our learning involves looking outwards to learn from others locally, regionally and nationally. Many of you are actively engaged in this collaboration and benefitting from being able to work with others across your Regional Collaboratives and with schools and professionals in other areas. I am confident that this experience will continue across the country to help us develop a system that supports all learners.

You may wish to consider these first steps towards an empowered system by reflecting and discussing this first release of materials with your teams, learners and parent bodies. The following prompts may help structure your discussions:

- Where am I/are we on the journey of empowerment?
- Where do I/ we see our school?
- What does teacher agency look like?
- How can I/we ensure we develop an ethos of teacher agency?
- What do we need to do to be ready for a more empowered system?
- What needs to change?

I continue to be impressed by the commitment and expertise of all who work in Scottish Education and look forward to engaging with you over the coming months regarding these materials.

I ask that headteachers, share this letter with your staff team, and discuss the questions above, developing teacher agency that will ensure we grow as a learning system.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gayle Gorman -".

Gayle Gorman
HM Chief Inspector of Education