

Michael Russell MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

13 April 2012

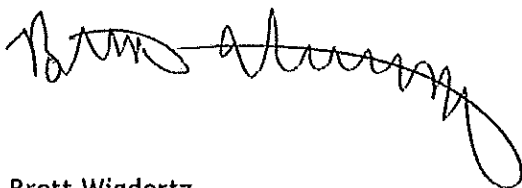
Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I understand that Mark Leishman, the Private Secretary to our Patron the Prince of Wales, has recently been in touch regarding a possible meeting.

In recent months we have met with a number of organisations and institutions to discuss the potential of a Teach First-type programme in Scotland, building on our experience across the border. On 16<sup>th</sup> May, at your suggestion, we will be meeting with officials from the Learning Directorate to discuss this further. If there is the opportunity we would be very keen to also meet with you to answer any questions you might have about our approach and to learn more about to assess how such a programme could operate in Scotland to deliver the right impact.

Our experience shows that outstanding graduates can have a powerful impact on schools in disadvantaged areas, raising the attainment, aspirations and access to opportunities of children. We would love to bring that experience to the service of communities in Scotland and would be honoured if you were able to meet. I have attached a briefing on our progress and discussions so far for your reference.

Yours sincerely,



Brett Wigdortz  
Founder and CEO  
Teach First



**Teach First and Scotland**  
**Briefing for the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning**  
**Mr Michael Russell MSP**  
**April 2012**

## **Introduction**

This document is a brief update on Teach First and the prospect of it working in Scotland. As a leading charity with a decade of experience tackling educational disadvantage in England, Teach First is very enthusiastic about the prospect of developing a Teach First programme for Scotland and serving Scottish students who attend schools facing challenging circumstances in low-income areas. The success of Teach First in England is a testament to the power of dedicated outstanding graduates who work to close the achievement gap between student from low-socio-economic backgrounds and their well-to-do peers. Bringing Teach First to Scotland would support the Scottish government's drive to transform education in deprived areas. Over the last 18 months there has been growing interest from politicians, policy makers and the educational establishment in Scotland. However as in England, some regulatory changes would be required to enable Teach First to operate in Scotland. Teach First is excited to explore the potential of such a development.

## **Need for Teach First**

As policy makers in Scotland are only too well aware, the concentrations of child deprivation in Scotland, particularly in and around Glasgow are as high as many of the most deprived areas in Europe. In addition, there is a very close match between areas of low attainment at school and those areas with the worst levels of poverty and deprivation. This reflects the pattern seen elsewhere in the UK. There is a clear link between deprivation and educational attainment. Scottish government data shows that the areas of lowest attainments are the education authorities of:

- Glasgow City
- Dundee City
- East Ayrshire
- Clackmannanshire
- North Ayrshire

The creation of a Scottish programme would bring outstanding graduates as additional excellent teachers to the schools in the most deprived areas. As seen in England, Teach First participants will raise students' achievement and aspirations. Teach First teachers will inject a new energy into the schools and support aspirational head teachers in their reform efforts. Teach First participants will

enable schools to reach transformations such as the ones seen at Burlington Dales Academy and many other schools in England. Research has shown that schools in challenging circumstances which hire Teach First teachers go on to achieve higher exam scores and report significant improvements which their headteachers say is contributed to by the energy, expertise and leadership of these teachers. Establishing a Scottish Teach First programme would bring these benefits to Scotland and enable the Scottish education system to utilise the skill and knowledge of outstanding Scottish graduates who are currently leaving to teach in England.

## **Teach First activity in Scotland**

Teach First has traditionally recruited from Scottish universities, which are among the best in the world, with a particular focus on the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews, Strathclyde, Heriot-Watt University, and the University of Aberdeen. Since 2003, when Teach First launched, 245 graduates from Scottish universities have been recruited to start the two-year training programme in England. They cannot currently train through this route in Scotland. The majority of these graduates continue to teach or contribute to education in England.

## **Support for Teach First in Scotland**

The Donaldson review of teacher education in Scotland recommended the consideration of a model similar to Teach First to attract and train the most talented Scottish graduates as teachers. When the report of the review was released at a the Holyrood conference on teacher education conference, where Teach First was represented, the response from the conference delegates was very positive and demonstrated the level of interest from education practitioners especially head teachers and local authorities.

A number of MSP's from all parties have subsequently expressed interest in finding out more about Teach First and as a result Liam McArthur MSP of the Scottish Liberal Democrats has invited us to a parliamentary reception on 15<sup>th</sup> May to discuss educational disadvantage and how the Teach First model works .

The GTC (Scotland) has also expressed its willingness to support a local programme designed to meet Scottish teacher education standards as set by the council.

In terms of wider interest, we have had early stage discussions with individual universities in Scotland who have indicated strong interest in working with us, should the regulatory environment support a Teach First type approach to Initial Teacher training.

We know that teaching unions have in the past - as in England - expressed some reservations over this type of approach, fearing that it might lead to a dilution of teaching standards - something we definitely don't want. It is significant to note that similar early concerns in England have been fully addressed. A recent inspection of Teach First's initial teacher training by Ofsted rated it as Outstanding in every category. Now teaching Unions in England are very supportive of Teach First to the extent that the National Union of

Teachers has itself been actively involved in helping develop our new programme for primary schools.

## **Potential Expansion**

Should Teach First be invited to expand its work into Scotland, the Scottish programme would aim to serve the most deprived schools in Scotland. These are most likely to be in Glasgow given the high concentration of deprivation in the city. A local programme could realistically aim to place 40 Teach First participants in its first year and then grow in subsequent years.

A Scottish programme would be designed in-line with Scottish teacher education regulation and standards. It would be developed and implemented in collaboration with Scottish institutions especially universities reputed for the quality of their teacher education programmes.

However, Teach First can only proceed any further at the invitation of the Scottish government and with its full support.

## **Next Steps**

Teach First, with the support of Liam McArthur MSP is holding a parliamentary reception on 15<sup>th</sup> May to inform a wider audience of the programme and its potential. The event will also permit the assessment of interest amongst the key stakeholders.

Teach First staff will be meeting with colleagues from the Scottish Learning Directorate on 16<sup>th</sup> May to discuss further the potential of the programme in Scotland.

Teach First is also keen to meet with the Cabinet Secretary, Michael Russell MSP, to discuss at a high level the programme and the possibility of bringing the model to Scotland.

*For further information, please contact James Westhead, Director, External Relations, [jwesthead@teachfirst.org.uk](mailto:jwesthead@teachfirst.org.uk)*