

# **The Educational Institute of Scotland**

## **Rating of Teachers by Parents and Pupils**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 The following resolution was approved by the 2016 Annual General Meeting:

*"This Council resolves to survey Local Associations to ascertain:*

- (a) the extent to which schools and local authorities carry out exercises where pupils and parents are invited to rate or comment upon the service provided by individual teachers or groups of teachers;*
- (b) the nature of such exercises and their ascribed purpose;*
- (c) the impact of such exercises on teachers."*

- 1.2 The Employment Relations Committee decided to survey the Local Association Secretaries in the first instance. A total of 7 responses were received in response to the first letter. A further letter requesting additional information resulted in a further 7 responses being received. This gave a total number of responses of 14.

### **Report**

- 2.1 The responses indicated that most Councils (11) did not undertake such exercises or surveys. However, members of the Committee and Local Association Secretaries reported on inappropriate activities being practised under the heading 'Pupil Voice'. This aspect is discussed below.

### **Discussion – Pupil Voice**

- 3.1 Within schools, pupil involvement in decision-making is often referred to as 'Pupil Voice'. This involves pupils having the opportunity to have a say in decisions in school that affect them. It aims to encourage pupils to play an active role in their education.
- 3.2 One Local Association reported on an instance in a primary school in which such a rating exercise occurred. This involved the use of a "smiley face" survey in early primary stages ostensibly as part of ascertaining the 'pupil voice' and included two inappropriate questions about the teaching staff. Once the Local Association raised the concern formally with the Council, the survey was withdrawn and the practice ceased immediately.
- 3.3 Another Local Association provided examples where some primary pupils (P6/P7) were invited sit on interview panels and were asked which candidate they preferred. It is reported that this also happens in secondary schools. This practice ceased when it was reported to

the LNCT Joint Secretaries as a variation from the locally agreed appointments procedures.

- 3.4 Some Local Associations reported situations where some primary school pupils have been asked to comment on lessons carried out by their teachers. This may be done to "give the children a voice" but such endeavours could leave teachers feeling demoralised as it undermines their professionalism and professional judgements.

## **Conclusion**

- 4.1 There is insufficient evidence to suggest that Scottish Councils are carrying out exercises inviting pupils and/or parents to rate or comment upon the service provided by individual teachers or groups of teachers.
- 4.2 'Pupil Voice' is not a new idea. However, some of the examples provided indicate insufficient strategic thinking in relation to its purpose without a clear idea of success criteria against which they can be properly evaluated. This can lead to neutral or even negative outcomes.
- 4.3 Local Association Secretaries should seek to ensure when such initiatives are proposed, that teachers are not subjected to unjust criticism and that they respond to members' concerns.