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EIS Guidance on the new Devolved School Management Guidelines

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Introduction

In June 2019 the Scottish Government issued¹ new Devolved School Management Guidelines to Local Authorities, schools and stakeholders, setting out its advice on how Local Authorities should develop and implement their own Devolved School Management (DSM) schemes.

The new Guidelines are closely aligned with the Government's Education Reform Programme with the principles of subsidiarity and collaboration being key components of the Government's School Empowerment System. The Guidelines state:

Decisions are made closest to the learner wherever possible and should be delegated to headteachers and schools in line with the Education Reform programme. Schools are empowered to make the decisions that affect outcomes, while being part of a collaborative learning community and the Local Authority.

The Status of the Guidelines

The Guidelines are not legally binding on Local Authorities or schools, but they have been endorsed by COSLA, ADES, EIS and other stakeholders. To a degree, each Local Authority can interpret them in their own way, as the Guidelines state:

"It is anticipated that every Local Authority Scheme will apply the areas identified as 'expected' [in the Guidelines] within their individual scheme. Areas identified as "recommended" [in the Guidelines] enable the Local Authority to determine their own decision in meaningful consultation with stakeholders.

The Effect of the Guidelines on Schools

The Guidelines seek to increase current levels of devolved school management at some Local Authorities/schools so that the principle of school empowerment is applied consistently across Scotland.²

The EIS believe that the Guidelines should lead to three significant changes within schools:-

- More decision-making will take place within schools;
- That decision making will be a more collaborative process;
- A greater element of resources may be allocated to some schools directly thus allowing the school to decide as to how resources should be used rather than the Local Authority³.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2019/06/devolved-school-management-guidelines/documents/devolved-school-management-guidelines/devolved-school-management-guidelines/govscot%3Adocument/devolved-school-management-guidelines.pdf>

² The Guidelines includes the Scottish Government/COSLA Joint Agreement which includes: "The principle of headteacher empowerment will be applied consistently across Scotland."

³ The Guidelines state "Decision making about funding that affects the school should sit, therefore, at school level unless there is a compelling reason for this not to be the case."

Ensuring the Guidelines Enable Your School and EIS Members to be Empowered

The Guidelines set out clear expectations as to how schools' decision-making processes should be structured in order to deal with the increased resources and devolution at school level. The Guidelines are designed to support an *Empowered Schools System* with an enhanced role for headteachers, teachers and other stakeholders.

The Guidelines state:

"In an empowered system, headteachers are expected to be collaborative and collegiate in their approach, challenging themselves and stakeholders to be solution focused and embrace joint working with the learning community, teachers, support staff, partners, other schools and the Local Authority."

"...headteachers are expected to deliver the most appropriate and efficient use of staff, ensuring equity, transparency and clarity whilst promoting and supporting collaboration and collegiate working."

"... headteachers in collaboration with stakeholders will make decisions on the spending within that delegated budget."

"An empowered school should have established systems and mechanisms which ensure that decisions are made in collaboration with stakeholders and which lead to better outcomes for children and young people."

The Guidelines state:

"Headteachers are expected to consult with staff, parent councils, pupils, trade unions and the wider community on appropriate matters to inform resource decisions. It is expected that headteachers provide clear information on local budgets and resource allocation including school staffing models, DSM decisions, allocation of departmental or class resources, formulae, criteria or methodologies used within the school. To facilitate consultation, it is expected that headteachers form appropriate mechanisms or forums for regular engagement and consultation with stakeholders to discuss and consult on any relevant area. To facilitate collective decision making a range of consultation approaches are in place within schools which include:

- *School committees*
- *staff meetings*
- *parent council*
- *pupil councils*
- *working groups"*

The Guidelines cite a 'School Fund Consultation Committee' as an example of good practice:

"Headteacher training in Dundee includes information on their Roles and Responsibilities related to Finance, and the recommendation that schools should have a DSM and School Fund Consultative Committee."

The Guidelines' Summary (Appendix A) states:

Consultation and engagement between headteachers and staff groups should take place to inform appropriate resource decisions, including: budget, staffing models, department budget allocations and savings.

Headteachers should form appropriate mechanisms or forums for regular engagement and consultation with staff, parents and wider stakeholders as appropriate.

Headteachers should consult with staff, parent councils, pupils and the wider community on appropriate matters, these may include school staffing models, DSM decisions, allocation of departmental or class resources and include formulae or criteria used within the school.

Headteachers share and discuss local school decisions, budget and resource allocations with staff groups and wider stakeholders as appropriate.

It is recommended that at school level this includes methodology and distribution of budgets and resources.

Advice for EIS Engagement

- 1. The new Devolved School Management Guidelines should lead to each Local Authority reviewing their current Devolved School Management Scheme, and, if necessary, amending it to align with the newly issued Guidelines. EIS Local Association representatives are encouraged to ensure that they are a part of any such review process, and that school reps are kept informed of outcomes.**
- 2. EIS school representatives are encouraged to assist in facilitating the delivery of the new Guidelines in their schools and to engage with their senior management team to determine what additional responsibilities (i.e. decisions) will be coming to their school as a result of the revised Devolved School Management Guidelines.**
- 3. EIS school representatives are encouraged to engage with members and identify where the finance, resource and pedagogical decisions are currently made in their schools – to understand the decision-making systems and mechanism in their schools – and develop a plan of how they should be made in accordance with the Guidelines.**
- 4. EIS school representatives and members should engage with senior managements to form school committees, to work collegiately and collaboratively in a distributive leadership structure in order to make the best possible decisions on finance, resources and pedagogy as set out in the Guidelines.**