

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

Submission to Education and Culture Committee's

Review of Public Bodies' Spending and Outcomes – Education Scotland

1. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) welcomes the opportunity to provide an initial written submission in contribution to the Committee's review of the spending decisions made and the outcomes delivered by Education Scotland.
2. The decision to merge HMIe and Learning Teaching Scotland in 2010 prompted EIS concerns around the dual functions of the single organisation and its resultant capacity to provide effective support to schools. Five years on, the EIS believes that a degree of tension remains around responsibility for inspections and curricular support being encompassed within the same body. Whilst the primary function of the inspectorate remains reasonably well defined, and its activities understood, the EIS would express the view that the support function which Education Scotland inherited from LTS has been marginalised in significant ways.
3. The EIS continues to have concerns over the increasingly politicised role of Education Scotland within Scottish education. With the role of the Inspectorate having been brought closer to Government, questions remain about the independence of the inspection process and its relationship to Government policy. Even the simple fact that employees of ES were reclassified as civil servants is indicative of the centralisation which has occurred, with no discernible gain to Scottish education as a result.
4. Furthermore, the EIS would wish to highlight tensions between the different purposes of inspection: as an accountability tool and as a support mechanism for driving improvement. The EIS would suggest that inspection statistics might suggest the need for a more strongly supportive approach and possibly the abandonment of formal inspection altogether in favour of a model designed solely to provide support to teachers and educational establishments.
5. Feedback from EIS members in establishments which have been inspected provides a variable picture. While some EIS Representatives in schools report that members find the inspection process supportive, significant numbers express negative views on behalf of members. These centre on the damage done to staff morale by the process, the excessive workload and stress that inspection generates. The EIS has been supportive of the

moves towards self-evaluation as the basic approach to inspection but believes that the continued process of individual school inspection needs to be reviewed. Perhaps a more effective and efficacious model would be a return to the inspection of local councils around their responsibilities as education authorities.

6. The EIS recognises that the Education Scotland has been a significant partner in the development of Curriculum for Excellence. However, another source of frustration in recent years has been the inadequacy of the support provided at times from Education Scotland for CfE curriculum development and the introduction of new qualifications: learning and teaching resources and assessment materials with exemplars have frequently been made available too late and have often been of questionable quality. Related to this has been the issue of the accessibility of the Education Scotland website, although this has undergone improvement in recent months. All of this has added to the significant workload of teachers delivering all stages of the 3-18 curriculum.
7. Finally, the EIS view is that Education Scotland should have been stronger in its leadership in relation to the management of internal assessment within the new National Qualifications. It, along with other key agencies, has fallen short to date, in providing the level of guidance and exemplification that teachers required to enable more streamlined approaches to internal assessment.
8. That said, however, Education Scotland does endeavour, to some degree, to evaluate its effectiveness in terms of uptake of advice and support by stakeholders. It analyses website traffic on its site and social media communication in relation to CfE resources and advice. It also seeks the views of stakeholders via formal structures like the recent Project Board, which the EIS participated in, and makes use of surveys and evaluation forms following events which it organises.
9. Regarding the extent to which Education Scotland promotes high quality professional learning and leadership among practitioners, the EIS recognises the contribution that ES has made to this agenda. Education Scotland, for example, has worked collaboratively with the EIS on Tackling Bureaucracy within education and on promoting leadership within the Primary sector. Such partnership working is highly commendable, although the EIS was disappointed to have been excluded from similar CPD events organised by Education Scotland for Secondary teachers. The EIS is of the view that such activity is more beneficial, in terms of outcome, where there is involvement of the EIS, which is finely attuned to the professional learning needs of its members.