

## **THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND**

### **EIS Response to Education and Culture Committee Consultation on Proposed Stage 2 Amendment to the Education Bill: Standard for Headship**

The EIS does not oppose in principle the proposed amendment to the Education Bill to introduce a requirement for mandatory qualifications for headship in Scotland's schools, although we do have some reservations about the proposal and timescale, and would urge consideration by the Scottish Government of certain key issues.

Promoting leadership at all levels, the EIS believes, is vitally important for Scottish education. The encouragement of leadership in all within the teaching profession, underpinned by a commitment to collegiate working, is an essential means of enhancing quality throughout the education system generally, and in order to close the achievement gap specifically. For this reason, the EIS recognises the importance and value of additional professional qualifications for all teachers, including headteachers, who wish to pursue them.

The EIS is of the view that all professional learning for teachers should be regarded as essential investment in the profession and, therefore, where there is an associated cost, this should be fully funded by government-national and/or local. Continued and extended commitment to investment in Masters level learning, for all teachers, including headteachers, is key to the further enhancement of the high standards of teaching in our schools and is crucial if we are to reduce inequality of outcomes between Scotland's most and least disadvantaged children and young people.

Removing the cost to teachers of such vital professional learning would remove one of the existing disincentives to career progression, including that towards headship.

However, thorough consideration of the full range of current disincentives to teachers becoming headteachers is required in order to alleviate the difficulties around headteacher recruitment, especially in the primary sector, and where they are particularly acute in certain geographical areas.

To this end, workload at all levels affecting the capacity of teachers to take on additional leadership roles and affecting their decision-making around future career progression, must be addressed as a matter of priority.

The workload demands and growing complexity of the headteacher role itself, the associated poor work-life balance and high levels of stress are currently barriers to headteacher recruitment specifically. The creation of a mandatory qualification for headship does not address any of these issues and will not deliver the desired degree of enhancement of teacher professionalism within the system if there are inadequate numbers of teachers willing to embark upon this career progression route because of the barriers outlined above.

The EIS also has concerns about the short timescale for implementation of the proposed legislation, which has forced, perhaps, a somewhat rushed development of the Into Headship course. It is essential that any professional qualification for teachers, if it is to deliver the intended outcomes, is of high quality and guaranteed, both at its inception and for the duration of its existence, to meet the needs of participants and of Scottish education.

Furthermore, there is a need to analyse and monitor interest in the qualification against expected vacancies to ensure that the mandatory nature of the proposal does not create an unintended consequence of a shortage in headteacher appointments.

Should the legislation come into force, as is likely, the EIS believes that there should be careful equalities monitoring of access to and completion of the headship qualification, particularly in terms of race/ ethnicity/ nationality and gender, with a view to any issues of under-representation being addressed.

Consideration must also be given to equity of access to the qualification for teachers across local authority areas, and, in the event of inequalities emerging as a consequence of funding arrangements or other factors, these must be addressed.