CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE WORKING GROUP ON TACKLING BUREAUCRACY

FOLLOW-UP REPORT

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum for Excellence Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy brings together teacher associations, local authorities and other partners to agree ways of cutting unnecessary bureaucracy arising from the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. We issued a report in November 2013 setting out key messages and actions to be taken forward over academic year 2013/14. We have now met to review progress and agree this follow-up report.

Our main conclusions are that progress has been made but more needs to be done.

» **The most significant progress in tackling bureaucracy is through taking a collegiate approach.** Professional dialogue is essential to agreeing the actions that need to be taken to tackle unnecessary bureaucracy and judging their success. If Headteachers have not already done so, they should discuss with their staff how best to tackle bureaucracy and include agreed actions in School Improvement Plans.

» Current School Improvement Plans and Working Time Agreements should reflect the actions in the Group's original report. Where this is not the case, the actions in this follow-up report should be incorporated in School Improvement Plans and Working Time Agreements for session 2015/16.

» Effective use should be made of LNCTs (Local Negotiating Committees for Teachers) and other professional fora to agree priorities for tackling bureaucracy and evaluating the impact of the changes made.

» Education Scotland will continue to use its inspection teams to challenge unnecessary bureaucracy and offer practical assistance to schools and local authorities. For example, Education Scotland recently highlighted tackling bureaucracy in a primary school inspection report as a main point for action.

» Education Scotland will work with teacher associations and ADES on a series of workshops to provide practical guidance and exemplification to reduce bureaucracy. This will build on the success of the joint events held last year.

» SQA and local authorities will continue to streamline verification procedures for the new qualifications.

The Working Group will assist schools and local authorities to tackle bureaucracy by highlighting where changes need to be made and providing exemplification through Education Scotland and SNCT (Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers) websites to help make those changes.

This report highlights specific areas where changes need to be made to tackle unnecessary bureaucracy. These are forward planning; assessment; self-evaluation and improvement processes; and monitoring and reporting. The report outlines the actions that should be taken in each of these areas and gives examples of good practice.

Everyone in education has a responsibility to root out unnecessary bureaucracy. It is essential that we work together to ensure that Curriculum for Excellence focuses on high quality learning and teaching rather than the fruitless management of pointless paperwork. **The best way to do this is through simplifying processes and focusing on key priorities.**

Dr Alasdair Allan
Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages

Forward Planning

The Group said that:

> *Forward planning should be proportionate: there is no need to plan, assess, record and report at the level of each and every Experience and Outcome. It is almost always better to group together related Experiences and Outcomes and focus on the most significant aspects of teaching and learning.*

> *Forward planning should support professional dialogue rather than simply fulfil an audit function.*

Evidence from Education Scotland and teacher association surveys suggests that, where excessive bureaucracy is an issue, inappropriate ways of forward planning can be a significant factor.

Schools and local authorities should simplify their procedures to ensure that forward planning is high-level and less time consuming. In particular, forward planning should not be undertaken at the level of each and every Experience and Outcome.

Exemplification

Education Scotland has made available on its Tackling Bureaucracy website the following case studies on how schools have streamlined their forward planning processes:

» Burnside Primary School in Angus has evaluated and revised its use of an ICT system to reduce the bureaucracy of planning.

» Lochside Primary School in Dumfries and Galloway has reviewed and evaluated its curriculum planners to reduce significantly the bureaucracy of planning for staff.

Link to Tackling Bureaucracy website:

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/t/tacklingbureaucracy/planningforlearning.asp?strReferringChannel=resources&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-838606-64

Examples from local authority responses to the Working Group that will be made available on the SNCT website include:

» Fife Council worked with practitioners and teacher association representatives to develop guidance to reduce workloads around planning.

» East Dunbartonshire developed guidance for early years, primary and secondary schools to tackle bureaucracy in each sector. Schools and establishments were asked to use the guidance to review their systems for planning, assessment and reporting. This should be included in the School Improvement Plan with time allocated within the Working Time Agreement.

» Argyll and Bute has a dedicated intranet site and blog, *Sharing Argyll Learning Ideas* (SALI) where teachers can share information, resources and ideas on tackling bureaucracy.

Link to SNCT website: **http://www.snct.org.uk/**

Assessment

The Group said that:

Assessment judgements, particularly within broad general education but also in the senior phase of CfE, should be based on evidence drawn mainly from day-to-day teaching and learning. Tracking pupil progress and moderation is important; however, there is no need to produce large folios of evidence to support this. Assessment within CfE is based on the exercise of professional judgement.

The Group has found that, while progress has been made, there is an on-going need for SQA, local authorities, schools and staff to take more proportionate and manageable approaches to assessment.

» In the broad general education, schools should focus on assessing progress in significant aspects of learning rather than at the level of individual Experiences and Outcomes.

» In the senior phase, SQA and local authorities should continue to streamline assessment and national and local quality assurance processes for National Qualifications and ensure that these are aligned and proportionate.

The Group supports the recommendations in the report of the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board's Working Group on the First Year of the New National Qualifications as a means of reducing unnecessary bureaucracy in relation to the new qualifications. **http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ MBReportOnFirstYearofNewQuals_tcm4-837160.pdf**

The Group welcomes the actions that have been taken to date in response to these recommendations, and calls on all concerned to continue to make rapid progress. The Group wishes to emphasise the importance of clear exemplification and good practice in the use of combined/holistic/continuous assessment, as a critical step in reducing

assessment demands on teachers and pupils, and enhancing the learning and assessment experience.

Exemplification

Education Scotland has published on its website guidance and exemplification on assessing progress and achievement in significant aspects of learning: **http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/ learningteachingandassessment/assessment/progressandachievement/ professionallearningresource/curriculum/index.asp**

SQA will continue to publish a range of materials and good practice to help reduce assessment demands on schools and develop better understanding of standards. This includes encouraging schools and local authorities to share prior verified materials. SQA will work with ADES to promote further sharing of materials. **www.sqa.org.uk/ understandingstandards**

Self-evaluation and Improvement Planning

The Group said that:

Whole school approaches to self-evaluation play a key role in improving performance but over-reliance on audit and "tick box" approaches can distract from high quality teaching and learning. Self-evaluation should focus only on the key information required to support improvement.

The Group has found that some local authorities and schools have significantly streamlined their self-evaluation and improvement planning by, for example, focusing on a concise set of objectives. However, there is insufficient evidence that this good practice is taking place across the country.

Local authorities and schools should review their approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning to ensure that these are proportionate. Improvement plans should focus on a manageable number of priorities that clearly show better outcomes for learners.

Exemplification

Examples from local authority responses to the Working Group that will be made available on the SNCT website include:

» Perth and Kinross has worked with a group of senior school leaders to simplify their Education Services Plan and every School Improvement Plan. Both plans now contain a maximum of three strategic outcomes which are timed, aligned and measurable.

» Aberdeenshire agreed a joint approach with their LNCT to tackling bureaucracy. This included revising improvement planning, standards and quality reporting and quality assurance procedures to ensure that the improvement agenda is managed with reduced paperwork.

» Aberdeen City has implemented a two-year education plan with four identified priorities and all work should articulate with this plan.

» Highland has streamlined expectations for School Improvement Plans and Standards and Quality reports to include less priorities, make them more accessible and avoid duplication.

Link to SNCT website: **http://www.snct.org.uk/**

Monitoring and Reporting

The Group said that:

ICT planning and reporting systems should be used with caution. There should be a realistic evaluation of the time required to utilise such systems and this should be factored in to school improvement plans. Just because such systems can support very detailed planning and reporting, does not mean they should be used in that way. What matters is that systems are used effectively to support and protect time for professional dialogue.

Parents are looking for reports that give a clear, rounded personalised summary of their child's learning and progress. They want good quality conversations with teachers that feel personal and specific to their child. The paperwork needs to support this rather than becoming an end in itself. Report card formats and other arrangements for reporting should avoid jargon and "tick box" approaches such as covering each and every Experience and Outcome.

The Group has found that some monitoring and tracking systems are still being used in an overly bureaucratic manner. **Local authorities and schools should focus on providing robust, concise information drawn from day-to-day learning and teaching that gives a clear picture of progress and achievement.**

Local authorities and schools should regularly review the efficacy of ICT systems for planning and reporting to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and do not unnecessarily take time away from teaching.

Schools should involve parents in developing more simple and effective means of reporting that emphasise quality of engagement rather than reams of paperwork. Parents want to know what their child should be achieving and whether they are doing so, along with practical, simple, specific things parents can do to support their child's learning.

Exemplification

The National Parent Forum of Scotland has produced guidance on parental perspectives for more streamlined and effective reporting to parents. This report recommended a three-way process in which schools, parents and learners were all involved in assessment and reporting. Parents should be seen as part of the process, being supported to talk to their child about their learning and next steps and with a right to know how their child is being assessed and performing. **http://www.npfs.org.uk/npfs-assessment-group/**

Education Scotland has made available on its Tackling Bureaucracy website the following examples:

» Glasgow has developed a streamlined and more effective approach to tracking and monitoring progress in the broad general education.

» Stirling and Clackmannanshire primary schools and nurseries have simplified their approach to reporting to parents.

Link to Tackling Bureaucracy website:
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/t/tacklingbureaucracy/ planningforlearning.asp?strReferringChannel=resources&strReferring PageID=tcm:4-838606-64

Examples to be made available on the SNCT website include the following:

» Dumfries and Galloway agreed with its LNCT a set of principles on tackling bureaucracy. This includes that ICT systems and software should support effective learning and teaching and their use should be guided by the principles of continuity; accessibility and ease-of-use.

» Bearsden Academy has developed a monitoring and tracking system in the broad general education that they have found simple to use, draws on information from day-to-day learning and teaching and is supported by professional dialogue and interventions.

Link to SNCT website: **http://www.snct.org.uk/**

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

ADES	–	**Association of Directors of Education in Scotland**
AHDS	–	**Association of Heads and Deputes in Scotland**
COSLA	–	**Convention of Scottish Local Authorities**

Education Scotland

EIS	–	**The Educational Institute of Scotland**
NASUWT	–	**National Association of Schoolmasters/**
		Union of Women Teachers
NPFS	–	**The National Parent Forum of Scotland**

The Scottish Government

SLS	–	**School Leaders Scotland**
SQA	–	**Scottish Qualifications Authority**
SSTA	–	**Scottish Secondary Teachers Association**
Voice		

Link to Group's original report:
http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00438617.pdf

The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba