⬧**EDINBVRGH**⬧
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Item no **16**
Report no

Commission on School Reforms: Call for Evidence

Education, Children and Families

21 June 2012

1   Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to:

1.1   Inform Committee of the Commission on School Reform's call for written evidence;

1.2   Present the Children and Families' proposed response (Appendix 1) and request comments/amendments as appropriate.

2   Main report

2.1   The Commission on School Reform was set up by the Reform Scotland and the Centre for Scottish Public Policy to consider whether the school system in Scotland is meeting the present and future needs of young people and to make specific recommendations as to how things might be improved or areas that require further enquiry.

2.2   In an increasingly competitive global economy and at a time of difficult challenges, education is universally regarded as having a vital role to play in equipping Scotland to face these challenges. Education needs to improve, and continue improving, if it is to meet the country's present and future needs.

2.3   The Commission has four objectives:

i) To form a fair and objective view of Scotland's educational performance compared with what is provided elsewhere;

ii) To consider the challenges that Scottish education is likely to face in the next 50 years and how likely it is to meet those challenges;

iii) To identify any problems with the current school system in Scotland and try to analyse the root causes of them;

iv) To develop proposals that will enable young people, whatever their background, to fulfil their potential and meet the unprecedented challenges of the modern world.

2.4   In meeting these objectives, the Commission will consider key themes such as: standards within Scottish education; diversity within the Scottish school system; the governance structures of schools; quality assurance; funding; and, broad social factors affecting education.

2.5   The call for written evidence covers three main questions:

- What are the main challenges facing Scottish schools and how are they best addressed?
- Is Scottish education sufficiently ambitious? What should it do to ensure that it meets future challenges and remains internationally competitive?
- What are the outcomes for children and young people that we should hold as being most important?

2.6 The Children and Families' draft response is provided in Appendix 1 and has been developed through consultation with all Edinburgh head teachers. The key points in the response include:

- A strong commitment to implementing Curriculum for Excellence;
- Ensuring that all young people leave school into positive destinations in employment, education and training;
- Raising the attainment of the lowest achieving 20% of young people, including disaffected pupils;
- Maintaining staff morale and motivation against a background of change and uncertainty;
- The exponential growth in ICT and schools ability to respond to this, including the need for new teaching approaches;
- The role of schools in developing children's healthy lifestyles, including responses to concerns about children's mental health;
- The expectation of being able to do more with less in a time of economic constraint;
- The need to be more ambitious for, and challenging with, identified groups of young people;
- The need to improve engagement with parents.

3 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

4 Equalities Impact

4.1 The response highlights the need to improve outcomes for marginalised and vulnerable young people.

5 Environmental Impact

5.1 There is no environmental impact.

6 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the Education, Children and Families Committee considers and either amends or agrees the response as attached at Appendix 1.

<div align="right">

Gillian Tee
Director of Children and Families

</div>

Appendices	1. Commission on School Reform: response to call for written evidence
Contact/tel/Email	Gillian Tee, Director of Children and Families, 0131 469 3322, Gillian.Tee@edinburgh.gov.uk
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	
Background Papers	

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

<u>**Commission on School Reform**</u>

1. **What are the main challenges facing Scottish schools and how are they best addressed**?

(i)   Implementation of Curriculum for Excellence

There is full support for Curriculum for Excellence and its potential to make a real difference to outcomes for children and young people in Scotland.   The challenge is to ensure consistent and effective implementation in a way that secures:

- high quality teaching and learning in every classroom
- effective progression and transition from early years through primary and secondary to post school
- a broad and balanced education
- high standards of educational attainment which are internationally competitive
- educational outcomes which equip young people for lifelong learning and work

There is still a lack of understanding regarding philosophy and vision of CfE among some professionals and 'lay people' including parents, and wider community/public, employers.

The current pace of change in education is unprecedented and the context is one of reducing resources.

<u>How are the challenges best addressed?</u>

- shared understanding of what constitutes high quality teaching and learning
- strengthen monitoring of quality of teaching and learning in classrooms
- better engagement of parents in schools to improve parental confident in CfE
- national benchmarks to assess progress in improving outcomes for children, particularly at primary and lower secondary and especially for literacy and numeracy though not just in relation to attainment
- strengthen arrangements for assessment, moderation and reporting to parents and share best practice
- strengthen ownership of CfE across all services e.g. employers, universities, college, community learning and development
- strengthen support for staff so there are opportunities for sharing standards and good practice within and between schools
- teacher engagement in extra curricular activities which keeps pupils engaged and brings parents into school
- empowered teachers who are confident and creative
- high quality teacher training ensuring that students without the necessary abilities are not able to progress to probation

- closer links between teacher training and authorities/schools
- Government/HMIE promotion of Curriculum for Excellence and support to realise
- its full potential including communication with parents
- peer sharing of classroom experiences so that it is owned by all staff
- clarity about national qualifications which are fit for purpose and have currency internationally
- ensuring mechanisms continue to be in place for in-school development and collaboration across schools/local authorities. Full implementation may take several years.

(ii) Ensuring that all young people leave school into positive destinations in education, employment or training.

How are the challenges best addressed?

- leadership and resources at a Government and Council level to ensure that school leavers are prioritised for opportunities in further and higher education, employment and training
- closer links between employers, colleges, universities and schools
- learning from examples of good practice e.g. Edinburgh Guarantee
- employers encouraged to support school leavers through jobs, internships, apprenticeships, work experience, mentoring
- improved information for young people about the opportunities available and for employers about how they can help
- positive destinations need to be appropriate and really meet young people's needs.

(iii) Raising the attainment of the lowest achieving 20% of young people including disaffected pupils

How are the challenges best addressed?

- CfE gives an opportunity to be really innovative for the lowest achieving 20%
- implement CfE with the focus on personalised learning and skills for life
- implement Getting it Right for Every Child with its focus on early identification and intervention, single assessment, single plan and lead professional
- whole system prioritisation to tackle the issue of drug and alcohol misuse in parents and young people
- strengthen support for children with emotional and behavioural needs in schools e.g. in-school learning, provision of nurture programmes, improving relationships, solution focussed/ restorative approaches
- strengthen joint agency support for schools to meet children's needs e.g. support services around each school cluster

- ensure whole Council and joint agency approach to tackle poverty and inequalities in areas of deprivation e.g. Total Place initiative
- more opportunities for multi-agency working but also clearer strategy within each agency so there is clarity for and empowerment of individual representatives.
- protect children from adverse impact of benefits reform
- strengthen multi agency arrangement to improve school attendance and reduce the need for exclusion
- strengthen support for children and families from prebirth through childhood e.g. including family nurse partnership, parenting, home-school links
- vocational curriculum development where skills for work have parity of esteem
- improved business links

(iv) Maintaining staff morale and motivation against a background of:
- changes to conditions of service
- changes to career pathways and progression/promotion
- retention and recruitment of staff

Need to nurture new, young staff who are real enthusiasts for CfE, active learning, ICT, innovative teaching and learning specialisms.

Leadership at all levels needs to be strengthened – not just for those with 'promoted' or 'salaried' responsibilities. Entry into the profession is all important in getting the right people.

(v) The exponential growth in ICT and school ability to respond to this, including the need for new teaching approaches.

(vi) The role of schools in developing children's healthy lifestyles, including responses to concerns about children's mental health.

(vii) The expectation of being able to do more with less in a time of economic constraint.

2. **Is Scottish education sufficiently ambitious? What should it do to ensure that it meets future challenges and remains internationally competitive?**

Need to be realistic about the difficult economic context and fewer jobs.

There is some evidence that young people from other countries are more ambitious/motivated to make the most of educational opportunities, e.g. the value other countries place on PISA results.

There is a lack of national benchmark/assessment of standards of educational attainment, even basic literacy and numeracy skills, other than at the end of secondary school. There is a lack of national benchmarks for other non-attainment related measures of success.

We have not yet reduced the attainment gap.

Parental influences are really significant. Engagement with parents is crucial.

Some parents are not ambitious enough for their children e.g. persistent non attendance. Schools need more help with non-engaging parents.

We need to do more to ensure that education meets society's future challenges for economic development e.g. link between skills in schools and future patterns of employment/skills required by employers. Which languages should our children be learning?

Some children lack confidence or resilience to take risks, learn from failure, and understand that working hard makes a difference.

Awareness that prospects for current pupils are perhaps not encouraging – current levels of unemployment, graduates out of work, disappointed career prospects – how do we inspire and encourage families and pupils to value and engage in education?

Growing number of families where nurture and responsibility are becoming the schools' job.   Similar social and economic uncertainties and stresses were prevalent in late 80s.

Cultural Expectations – bright pupils wanting to appear 'cool' – not to be 'engaging'.

Education is no longer seen as key to social mobility.

Technological society has had some negative effects – need to re-educate for healthy lifestyles.

Schools need to be able to do more to improve self-esteem and confidence of pupils – but this is rooted in positive family culture – schools cannot do it on their own.

3. **What are the outcomes for children and young people that we should hold as being most important?**

   - all young people leaving school into positive destinations
   - high standards of educational attainment on leaving school which compare well internationally
   - high standards of language, literacy and numeracy
   - positive health outcomes (living a healthy lifestyle, reduced drugs and alcohol misuse, fewer teenage pregnancies)
   - successful learners with skills for work and lifelong learning
   - confident individuals who are happy, motivated and resilient

- effective contributors who have good social and communication skills
- responsible citizens who respect the needs of others
- we need to be more ambitious about the potential use of ICT
- young people have a role in terms of their involvement in influencing these outcomes

The four capacities of CfE are the right outcomes and underpin everything.