

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 3 March 2015

Response to 'School Education' – a report of an audit by the Accounts Commission, June 2014

Item number 7.2
Report number
Executive/routine
Wards

Executive summary

In June 2014 the Accounts Commission published a report on School Education, the result of an audit to assess how efficiently and effectively councils are using their resources to maximise pupil achievement in schools. The audit focused on primary and secondary school education in Scotland and on how councils deliver education.

This report gives our response to the recommendations in the report.

Edinburgh has a relatively small amount of spend per pupil at both primary and secondary but shows sustained improvement in attainment at all levels. The full picture of the latest performance in attainment is available later on the agenda in the Educational Attainment 2014 report.

Links

Coalition pledges [P5](#)
Council outcomes [CO2](#)
Single Outcome Agreement [SO3](#)

Response to ‘School Education’ – a report of an audit by the Accounts Commission, June 2014

Recommendations

- 1.1 Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to note the content of the report including the areas of progress and further improvement.

Background

- 2.1 School education accounts for a significant proportion of local government spending, and a number of important education policy developments have taken place in recent years, such as the introduction of CfE. However, there has been no independent evaluation of how much councils spend on education and what this delivers in terms of improved attainment and wider achievement for pupils.
- 2.2 The June 2014 Accounts Commission report on School Education was the result of an audit to assess how efficiently and effectively councils are using their resources to maximise pupil achievement in schools. The areas examined were:
- How much councils spend on school education and what they spend it on;
 - How effectively councils are driving forward improvements in pupil achievement;
 - How effectively councils are using their resources to maximise pupil achievement.
- 2.3 2014 is the first year in which pupils are sitting new qualifications, introduced as part of CfE, which will render comparisons with previous years impossible. The audit has been timely as it provides an assessment of attainment over the last decade.
- 2.4 The report includes a number of key messages and recommendations for Councils. This report, taking into account the key messages, details how City of Edinburgh Council is already taking forward work noted in the recommendations.

- 3.1 The Accounts Commission report is in three parts. The first looks at how much councils spend on education and how this has changed. The second assesses exam performance over the last decade for S4-S6 and examines what wider achievement activities are available for pupils to prepare them for life and work. The third comments on what councils have been doing to improve attainment and wider achievement and how they are targeting their resources to seek improvement.

Key Messages

- 3.2 The report states that in 2012/13 councils spent £4.8 billion on education services, of which £3.8 billion was spent on primary and secondary education, with around two-thirds of this expenditure on staff. Overall spending on education fell by five per cent in real terms between 2010/11 and 2012/13, largely as a result of employing fewer staff.
- 3.3 The report also states that performance improved against all ten of the attainment measures examined across Scotland (S4–S6) over the last decade with significant variation between individual councils, schools and groups of pupils. There are no comparable measures available at a council and national level on wider achievement or the performance of pupils from P1-S3.
- 3.4 Information from the Local Government Benchmarking Framework shows that Edinburgh has a relatively small amount of spend per pupil at both primary and secondary (see Appendix 1 for the relevant extract from the report – Exhibit 3 shows Edinburgh’s spend per pupil in comparison to the other Urban authorities).
- 3.5 Appendix 1 contains two further extracts (Exhibit 8 and Exhibit 10) from the report showing Edinburgh’s comparative performance in attainment. In particular, Edinburgh ranks 12th out of all Local Authorities in the indicator on attainment of pupils in S4, in particular the percentage of pupils in S4 achieving five or more SCQF awards at Level 5 or above (Exhibit 8). Edinburgh ranks 13th out of all Local Authorities on improvement in performance over the past ten years on the same indicator (Exhibit 10).
- 3.6 The three graphs in Appendix 1 demonstrate that, despite the relatively small amount of spend per pupil, educational attainment in Edinburgh is good. Further detail of performance in attainment can be found in the Children and Families Standards and Quality 2014 report and the Education Attainment report, also presented to Education, Children and Families Committee on 3 March 2015.
- 3.7 The report notes that, nationally, levels of deprivation have a large influence on attainment. Some schools across the country have achieved better results than their levels of deprivation would indicate, suggesting that the gap between the

highest and lowest performing schools cannot be wholly attributed to different levels of deprivation.

- 3.8 The Local Government Benchmarking Framework also recently published information on attainment of pupils in deprived areas. This data shows that in Edinburgh there is improvement in the attainment of those pupils who live in the most deprived areas, but the gap remains high compared with the national figure. A new online benchmarking tool, *Insight*, has been provided to schools and Local Authorities across Scotland to support implementation of improvements for pupils in the senior phase. One of the four key indicators provided is attainment by a measure of deprivation, also using SIMD. Schools in Edinburgh are being supported in the use of this tool and in the identification of those at risk of being a lower attainer.
- 3.9 The report states that Councils that have made the most improvements have focused on areas such as developing leadership skills, and improving both teacher quality and systems for monitoring and tracking pupil data. Councils are starting to target resources to improve attainment and wider achievement but there is scope to improve strategic planning and strengthen the role of elected members in holding education services to account.
- 3.10 Strategic planning for children and families in Edinburgh has been a key strength for a number of years with an annual strategic service plan and standards and quality report presented to Committee. The plan details strategies for continued improvement of service provision to children and families in Edinburgh and the standards and quality report reports progress made. The quality of leadership is recognised as a key lever essential to raising attainment and is an integral part of our improvement strategy.

Report recommendations

- 3.11 The following table shows the recommendations included in the report along with a comment on how Edinburgh is approaching the issue:

Accounts Commission recommendation	Examples of how the Council currently addresses, or plans to address this
Councils should ensure they fully understand why levels of attainment vary between their schools and different groups of pupils	<p>The annual Educational Attainment report captures the variance levels of attainment across the school estate. In addition, each school has mechanisms in place to track progress across the Broad General Education and the Senior Phase.</p> <p>Quality Improvement Officers discuss performance regularly with each school in their attainment visit.</p> <p>The following five levers are essential to raising attainment: the quality of teachers; the quality of</p>

Accounts Commission recommendation	Examples of how the Council currently addresses, or plans to address this
	<p>leadership; robust tracking and monitoring; involvement of parents in their child's learning and the importance of the learner clearly understanding how they are doing and what they need to do next in order to improve their learning. These key levers have been incorporated into our strategies for further improvement.</p>
<p>Councils should develop and implement strategies to reduce the gaps in performance between the highest and lowest performing schools</p>	<p>This is a key strategic priority and also includes raising attainment for young carers and looked after pupils.</p> <p>Analysis is carried out annually to provide schools with information detailing how well they are performing compared with their set of comparator schools across the country. Quality Improvement Officers discuss performance regularly with each school in their attainment visit.</p> <p>Specific examples of strategies include the Integrated Literacy Programme which has an appropriate emphasis on improving skills in Reading and Writing for the lowest 20% of pupils.</p>
<p>Councils should continue to work with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland to develop a suite of agreed performance measures which would provide an overall picture of educational attainment and achievement across Scotland</p>	<p>In session 2014, the new qualifications were introduced and the four new attainment measures have been implemented using the Scottish Government's senior phase benchmarking tool which is called 'Insight'.</p> <p>Edinburgh's contribution to the overall picture of educational attainment and achievement continues to be developed through the range of services delivered.</p> <p>Progress across a range of these indicators is reported annually in the standards and quality report.</p>
<p>Councils should review the sufficiency of information provided to education committees on attainment at S4-S6, pupil performance between P1-S3 and</p>	<p>The annual Educational Attainment report has been in place for several years and details improvements in performance in S4-S6 and P1-S3. Later versions of the report include information on wider achievement such as Duke of Edinburgh,</p>

Accounts Commission recommendation	Examples of how the Council currently addresses, or plans to address this
<p>wider achievement. They should also ensure committees have the time and support to adequately challenge and hold to account education services.</p>	<p>cycle training and outdoor learning. The report has evolved over time to ensure the Education, Children and Families Committee has sufficient information to understand performance at all levels.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee on Standards for Children and Families regularly considers the results from external inspections and internal reviews in order to maintain an overview of the quality of educational and care experiences for young people in the city.</p> <p>There is a good working relationship between the Committee Members and Officers allowing adequate support and challenge.</p>
<p>Councils should develop more coordinated approaches to gathering and recording information on the range of wider achievement activities offered in schools, including the levels of pupil participation and the outcomes they achieve. This will help councils to scrutinise performance and ensure resources are being used as efficiently as possible.</p>	<p>The annual Educational Attainment report now includes information on wider achievement such as Duke of Edinburgh, cycle training, volunteering and outdoor learning.</p> <p>The Children and Families Service Plan includes a number of wider achievement performance indicators under Strategic Outcome 2: Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities.</p> <p>Additionally the Children and Families Senior Management Team discusses in-depth performance on participation in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and Creative Learning opportunities such as music tuition • Sport and outdoor learning such as Active Schools programmes, Duke of Edinburgh Awards • Global citizenship • Health and wellbeing programmes • Informal learning provided by CLD.
<p>Councils should ensure education strategic documents contain clear</p>	<p>The Children and Families Service Plan is revised annually and outlines our key priorities for</p>

Accounts Commission recommendation	Examples of how the Council currently addresses, or plans to address this
<p>priorities and actions that set out what is to be achieved in the short, medium and long term. Performance management arrangements should monitor outcomes and report regularly on delivery against strategic objectives, such as raising attainment among lowest performing pupils</p>	<p>children’s services for the next three years in achieving our vision (Edinburgh’s children and young people to enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential) and in improving outcomes for children and young people and their families. The plan helps us deliver our priorities and helps our stakeholders understand what we are seeking to deliver and how we are planning to achieve it.</p> <p>We regularly assess our progress and each year we produce a Standards and Quality Report which details progress made over the previous year.</p>
<p>Councils should consistently use the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework to compare their performance against other councils, and share good practice to improve educational attainment and wider achievement</p>	<p>A set of performance briefings are produced for officers and members following publication of the Lothian Government Benchmarking Framework data. These show trends, comparisons with other councils and the national picture.</p>
<p>Councils should fully assess the potential long-term impact on attainment and wider achievement of budget reductions</p>	<p>All proposals for budget reductions include analysis of risk and impact. Education budgets have been protected in the Council’s 2015 budget setting process.</p>
<p>Councils should monitor and act on the impact of revised working practices and staff reductions across all affected groups (eg teachers, administrative staff, classroom assistants) on staff wellbeing by, for example, monitoring sickness absence levels and through specific questions in staff surveys.</p>	<p>An analysis of staff sickness data is discussed quarterly at Children and Families Senior Management Team. This includes trend information and year-to-date assessment of progress towards targets.</p> <p>The biennial Employee Survey includes wellbeing questions such as morale and satisfaction with workloads. Analysis of this data is considered at Children and Families Senior Management Team and improvement activity identified and carried forward through the People Planning Steering Group.</p>

Measures of success

- 4.1 The Children and Families Service Plan details the performance indicators used to measure progress and the Children and Families Standards and Quality Report annually reports progress made.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There is no direct financial impact arising from the report.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There is no direct risk, policy, compliance and governance impact arising from the report.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There is no direct equalities impact arising from the report.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There is no direct sustainability impact arising from the report.

Consultation and engagement

- 8.2 There is no direct impact on existing consultation and engagement processes.

Background reading/external references

[School Education report](#), published by Account Commission, June 2014

[Educational Attainment/Improvements in Performance 2013](#)

[Children and Families Standards and Quality Report 2014](#)

[Children and Families Service Plan 2014-2017](#)

[Local Government Benchmarking Framework data 2015](#)

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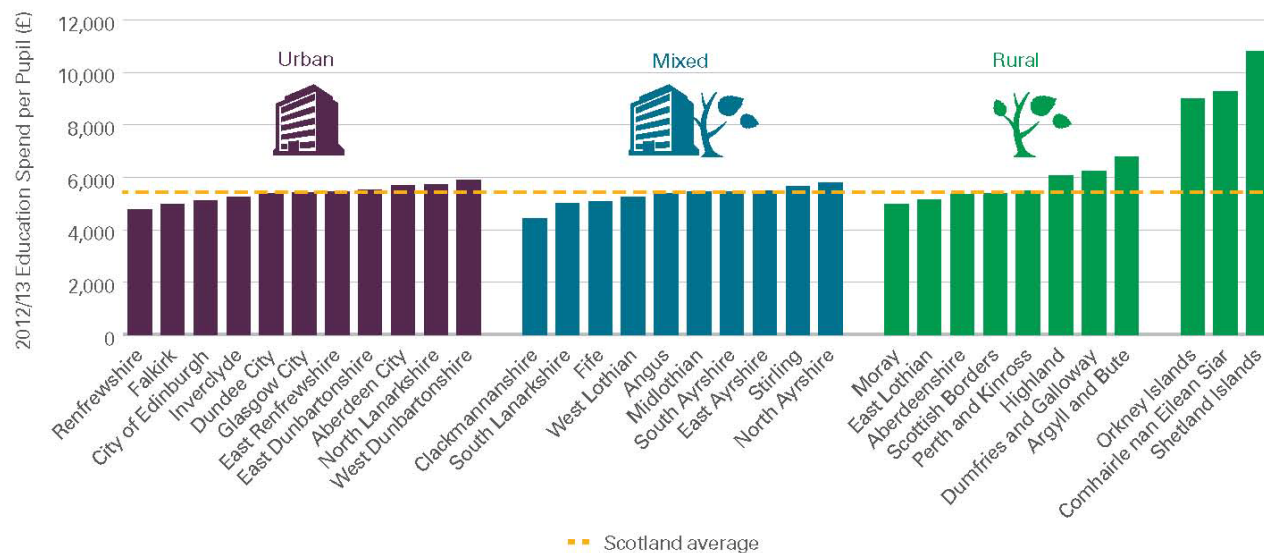
Links

Coalition pledges	P5 – Seek to ensure the smooth introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and that management structures within our schools support the new curriculum
Council outcomes	CO2 – Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3 – Edinburgh’s children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
Appendices	1. Extracts from ‘School Education’, Accounts Commission report

Exhibit 3

Spend per pupil by council, 2012/13

Spend per pupil varies widely across Scotland.



Note: Councils were categorised using the Scottish Government’s Urban Rural classification, 2011/12.

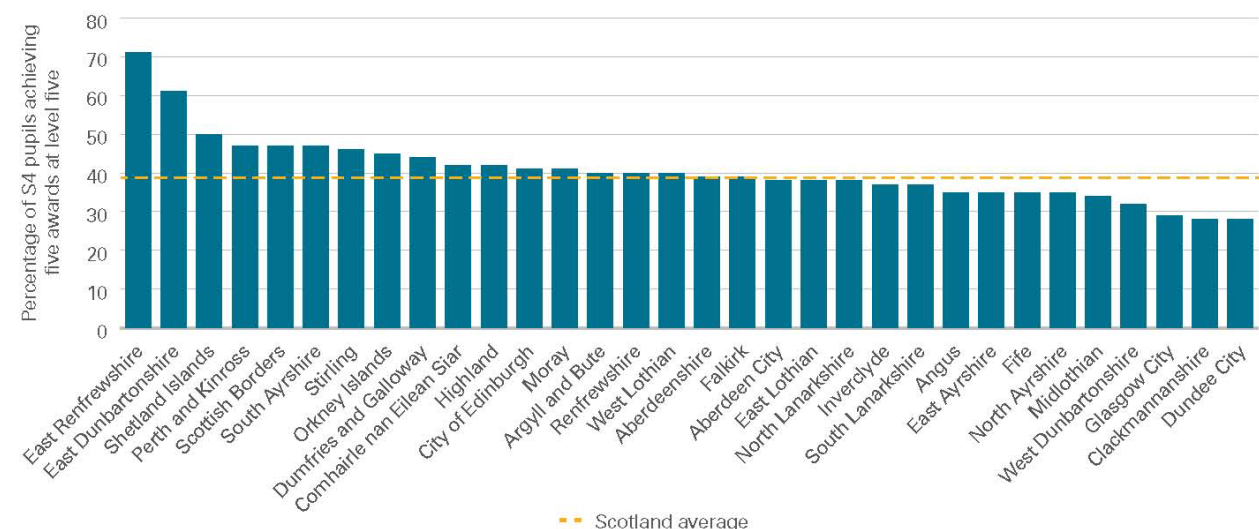
Source: Audit Scotland analysis using councils’ Local Financial Returns and additional information provided by councils, 2012/13; and data from *Pupils in Scotland*, Scottish Government, 2013



Exhibit 8

Percentage of S4 pupils achieving five awards at level five in 2013 by council

Performance varies widely across the country.



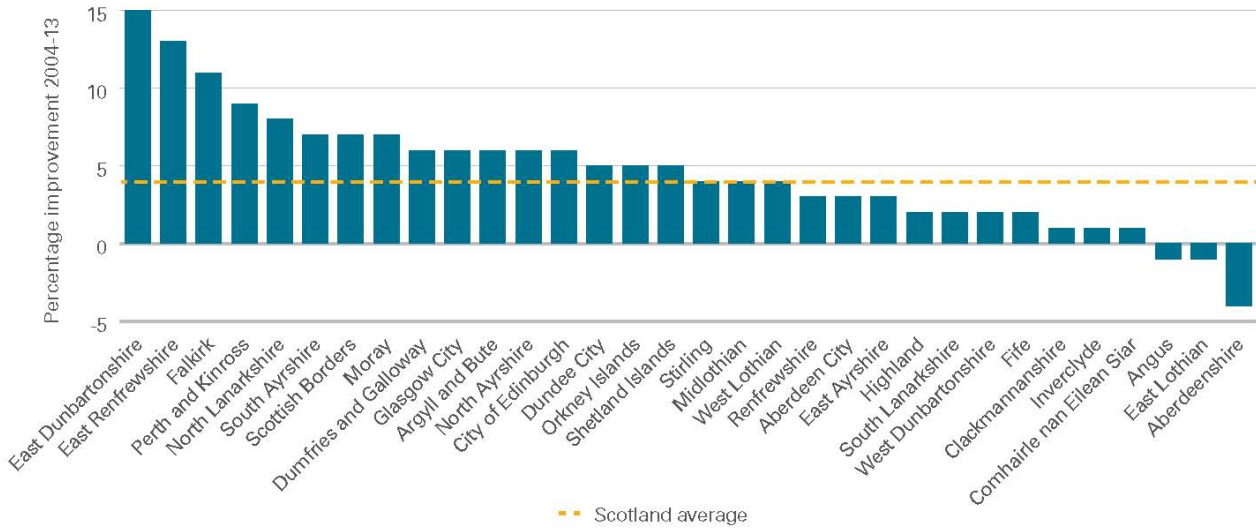
Source: Audit Scotland, using data from Scottish Government Education Analytical Services Division



Exhibit 10

Percentage improvement by council in the percentage of S4 pupils achieving five awards at level five, 2004-13

Improvements in attainment over the past ten years vary markedly across the country.



Source: Audit Scotland, using data from Scottish Government Education Analytical Services Division

