

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**  
**6 AUGUST 2009**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**School Manual – Revised Governance Framework**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport**

**SUMMARY**

This report seeks Member approval to extend the scope of the existing Devolved School Management (DSM) manual and to introduce a revised governance framework for this extended document.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The current Devolved School Management (DSM) manual was last updated in March 2007. In the intervening period there have been a number of significant issues that have resulted in a re-think about the content and purpose of this document. These issues include:-

- Budget pressures and in particular the annual requirement to contribute to the ECS savings target
- The importance of aligning staffing levels with budgeted staffing entitlements linked to roll-related formulae
- The cessation of ring-fenced grant funding, with the exception of Determined to Succeed and the Gaelic Development Grant
- The move towards Integrated Learning Communities
- Increased inter-agency activity associated with Getting it Right
- Scottish Government policy decisions in relation to reducing class sizes in the lower stages of Primary education.
- The on-going requirements of the McCrone settlement particularly in relation to reduced class contact time and reducing the administrative burden on teachers
- Increased statutory requirements in relation to the promotion of health and nutritional standards in schools
- The need for improved governance arrangements in relation to financial accountability, procurement and health and safety
- The potential change of culture at a school level as a result of the introduction of Phoenix e1
- The commissioning of 11 new schools under the terms of the second Public Private Partnership contract in Highland.
- The implementation of the Parental Involvement Act and the advent of Parent Councils
- Early Years and Childcare

1.2 This report outlines proposals to extend the content and purpose of the existing DSM manual to create instead a School Manual. This revised document will ultimately be the definitive statement outlining all issues relating to school-based activities, either directly or via links to other policy documents.

- 1.3 This report outlines the scope of the project required to bring about this transformation and seeks elected members' approval to proceed on this basis. The work to date on this has been carried out by a cross-service group comprising of Head Teachers, school-based-support staff, ECS Business and the Finance Service with representation from Accounting and Internal Audit.
- 1.4 This report helps deliver the commitment to be more effective and efficient contained within Strengthening the Highlands, the programme of the Highland Council 2009-11.

## **2. Principles and governance**

- 2.1 The School Manual should outline the governance framework within which Head Teachers must operate in relation to all statutory requirements, policies and agreements. For example this would cover specific areas, such as:-
- Financial regulations
  - Contract standing orders
  - Health & Safety policies
  - Contract design and management regulations
  - Personnel policies
  - SNCT/LNCT agreements
  - ECS Admin Circulars
- 2.2 This governance framework should apply to all resource-related activities within the school, including the School Fund and any other financial resources under the steward-ship of the Head Teacher, procurement, personnel, health & safety and duties associated with the role of Responsible Premises Officer.
- 2.3 The relative roles and responsibilities within the school should be clearly defined with a very clear understanding that the Head Teacher is ultimately responsible and accountable for ensuring that the school operates within this governance frame-work. The roles of the Area ECS Manager and the various specialists supporting schools have also to be clearly defined.
- 2.4 In order to ensure that new Head Teachers are aware of the School Manual governance frame-work it is essential that their induction programme includes an overview of the document and the relevant points of contact for each of the headings identified in paragraph 2.1 above. It will be mandatory for each new Head Teacher to make contact with each point of contact named within 6 months of appointment. In addition all existing Head Teachers, who have not already done so, should attend the appropriate resource-related training for example, financial management, procurement, health & safety, etc, etc.
- 2.5 The School Manual must be web-based, reviewed and updated at least once a year before the start of each academic session. There will be a series of Area-based meetings with all Head Teachers to accompany the launch of the new document in mid 2010.

### **3. Financial issues**

3.1 The review of the financial sections in the Manual will focus on the following areas:-

- Staffing budget entitlements – all designations
- Supply cover allocations – devolved and centrally held
- Non staffing budget entitlements
- Income budgets
- Wraparound childcare
- Budget monitoring and reporting (including the Red, Amber and Green analysis)
- Carry forward parameters
- School Fund management
- Reporting to Parent Councils

3.2 It is proposed that on the basis there is an effective system for aligning school staffing levels with budgeted entitlements and that the staffing and non-staffing budgets provided are in accordance with the current formulae entitlement then Head Teachers will be accountable for the effective management of the budgets allocated to the school on an annual basis.

3.3 The Head Teacher will be advised by the Finance Service in relation to budget management and related governance issues. This will include a mandatory requirement for Head Teachers to attend any financial management training courses that are offered periodically. The Finance Service will meet with Head Teachers once each school term and produce a formal record of the meeting. There will be a review of current devolved school management accounting arrangements in an attempt to simplify matters.

3.4 All schools should operate within the Council's Procurement framework including the use of corporate contracts awarded following a competitive tendering process.

3.5 It is proposed that by June 2010 all school-based transactions will be processed through PECOS and Oracle and that all paper order books will finally be withdrawn.

### **4. Administrative issues**

4.1 Within the School Manual there will be a separate section for Administrative arrangements that will include the following headings:

- Health & Safety
- Phoenix e1 operational procedures
- Letting procedures
- Landlord/tenant responsibilities in relation to property matters
- Placing requests
- Transport escorts for pupils with ASN
- Health promotion and nutritional standards in schools
- Energy efficiency measures
- Achieving ECO school status

- ICT refresh frame-work
- School capacity template
- Personnel policies and guidance

4.2 It is proposed that for each of the above headings detailed procedural and/or guidance notes are created. These notes will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## 5. Resource and equality implications

5.1 The objective is to create a comprehensive reference document that will, allied to the appropriate induction procedures, enable all Head Teachers to effectively manage the resources under their stewardship within the school.

5.2 During a period of financial austerity it is essential that there is an appropriate governance framework to ensure effective management of scarce resources. The School Manual has a significant role to play in achieving this objective.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Members are asked to approve:-

- The creation of a School Manual to replace the existing DSM manual and that this document will be available by June 2010
- The principles and governance proposals contained within section 2 of the report
- The review of the financial headings identified in section 3 of the report
- The creation of the appropriate detailed administrative procedural and guidance notes for the headings included within section 4 of the report
- That the School Manual will be a web-based document that will be reviewed and updated annually with appropriate procedures in place to provide an audit trail of the changes made

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Author: Ron MacKenzie, Head of Support Services

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2009

Ref: HF/RM

Background Papers: