

Your Ref: -
Our Ref: AC/AB/LMc
Date: 22 January 2018

Dear Teacher

The Highland Council is concerned by the plans of the Scottish Government to make sweeping changes to the way our schools are managed and governed.

This matter is of the greatest importance to Highland's children. As parents, and as the Depute Leader of the Council and Chair of the People Committee, we have written to all Headteachers about this. We are now writing this open letter to all teachers, to encourage you to make comment on the Government's plans.

The Scottish Government published *Education Governance: Next Steps* in June of last year. That document proposed radical changes to the responsibilities and legal duties of Headteachers, Parents, Local Councils and national bodies such as Education Scotland. The Government has now published proposals to implement many of these changes through new legislation. These can be found at:
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/9712>

Highland Council shares the ambition of the Scottish Government to raise attainment for all, and to close the gap between those children who are least and most advantaged. We do not believe that the *Next Steps* proposals will achieve this.

The proposals do nothing to declutter the current arrangements for Scottish education. They introduce new layers of scrutiny and management, and confuse responsibility and accountability for the management of schools.

Highland Council is committed to working with Headteachers to provide better opportunities to drive school improvement and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy as part of the management of schools programme. We welcome regional collaboration, but we do not believe that new formal structures and new legislation are necessary.

The Government's proposals remove responsibility for the improvement of education from Highland Council, and impose new responsibilities and duties at a Regional and

School level. Confusingly, while they significantly diminish the role of the local authority, Councils retain responsibility for Gaelic and denominational education, ASN and Early Learning & Childcare.

We also believe that the proposals will create new and unhelpful tensions between different parts of the education services system, and fragment relationships between schools and other services for children.

And critically, the Government has provided no detail about how it will resource these changes and fund a number of new national and regional bodies, at a time when it is providing less funding for local services.

We do not need new laws to have better schools and better outcomes for our children. Many of the intentions of Government can be achieved within the existing framework, and without the need for new legal duties on Headteachers.

Because the proposed changes are so far reaching, we are writing to urge you to discuss them with other teachers and within your trade union and professional associations.

We also urge you to consider making a response to the consultation. You can do this at the Scottish Government website, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00527374.docx>

Thank you for everything you do for Highland's children, for reading this letter and for caring about the future of Scottish education.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Alasdair Christie
Depute Leader of the Council,
and parent



Councillor Andrew Baxter
Chair of People Committee,
and parent