

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Foghlaim agus Ionnsachadh Fad-bheatha
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning
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To all Parent Council Chairs

cc: Headteachers

cc: Directors of Education



23 September 2015

Dear Parent Council Chair

As Education Secretary, I wanted to take this opportunity to write and thank you for the hard work you do as a Parent Council Chair for your school. I know that you give up your own time, not just for your own child, but for all the pupils in your school, and I appreciate the effort and commitment that this involves.

I regularly visit our schools and meet with children, parents and teachers. I see a great deal that makes me proud of what we have achieved in Scottish education. We have excellent teaching, record Higher and Advanced Higher results, more than nine in ten school-leavers securing jobs, training or continued education, and we have support in our schools to help our young people move on from school better equipped to make it in the world. In our Primary schools, we have children who are more confident and enjoy their learning, who are developing the skills that will help them as they move on in life. Curriculum for Excellence has attracted admiration and interest from around the world, with more opportunities and flexibility for children than ever before.

However, there is more that we need to do to make sure that our education system continues to improve and in particular, I want to make sure that our education system works for every child in Scotland. I want all children to make good progress in their learning, and to have the literacy and numeracy skills that they need to get on in the world. In particular, I want to close the gap in attainment between the least and most disadvantaged children in Scotland.

So the recent announcement by the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, of a draft National Improvement Framework for education, is an important development that I wanted to bring to your attention in your role as Parent Council Chair. The purpose of this new Framework is to help all of us improve our education system, for your child, for every child in your school, and for every child in Scotland.

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The Framework will bring together a range of key information in six different areas widely recognised internationally as helping to raise standards in education. These include information on assessment of children's progress, but also on teacher professionalism, school leadership, school improvement, parental involvement, as well as how we all make best use of performance information.

A new standardised assessment for children in P1, P4, P7 and S3 in aspects of literacy and numeracy will provide more consistent information on children's progress. The new standardised assessments are currently being designed with the input of teachers, parents and academic experts, and will be introduced in schools in 2017. These standardised assessments are not intended to be in addition to what already happens – so they won't increase the workload of teachers or put more additional pressure on pupils. Instead they will replace the variety of different standardised assessments that are currently used in different local authority areas. They also won't replace the professional judgement of teachers which remains at the heart of Curriculum for Excellence – they will inform it. They will support the range of assessment approaches that teachers already use every day in the classroom such as observation, project work, peer assessment and portfolios. They are being designed so that they will help teachers identify what stage a child is at in their learning, so that they can give feedback and plan next steps to help them improve. Importantly, they will help teachers provide parents with clearer information about their child's progress. They will also help local authorities and government plan where we may need to provide more support .

As we move forward to further develop the Framework, I want to hear from parents, teachers and children. There are a number of engagement events around the country where you can come along and discuss the proposals. I would also encourage you to discuss the Framework at your Parent Council and Local Area Parent Forum. I would be interested in any feedback you may have. You can find out more information about the Framework and the events at :

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/NationalImprovementFramework>.

I recognise the importance of keeping parents informed of any developments affecting their children's education and I will continue to work closely with the National Parent Forum of Scotland to make sure that you and parents in your school get regular information and updates about the Framework development.

I wish you every success with the work of your Parent Council during this school year and look forward to meeting some of you at events and in schools in the coming months.



ANGELA CONSTANCE