



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Education and Culture Committee

9th Report, 2013 (Session 4)

Annual Report

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Education and Culture Committee

Remit and membership

Remit:

The remit of the Committee is to consider and report on further and higher education, lifelong learning, schools, pre-school care, skills and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and matters relating to culture and the arts falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs.

Membership:

George Adam (from 18 September 2012)
Clare Adamson
Colin Beattie (from 18 September 2012)
Marco Biagi (until 18 September 2012)
Neil Bibby
Neil Findlay (Deputy Convener)
Jenny Marra
Stewart Maxwell (Convener)
Joan McAlpine
Liam McArthur
Liz Smith
Jean Urquhart (until 18 September 2012)

Committee Clerking Team:

Senior Assistant Clerk

Terry Shevlin

Committee Assistant

Judith Payen



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Education and Culture Committee

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Annual Report

We report to the Parliament as follows—

Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Education and Culture Committee during the Parliamentary year from 11 May 2012 to 10 May 2013. In this period, we have undertaken in-depth scrutiny of Scottish Government legislation and policies relevant to our remit.

2. In particular, we have scrutinised the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1; undertook an inquiry into decision making on whether to take children into care; held a series of one-off evidence sessions on topics relevant to our remit; considered the implications for Scotland of a Royal Charter on self-regulation of the press; carried out an inquiry into broadcasting, focussing on BBC Scotland's ability to deliver effective coverage at upcoming major events such as the referendum and the Commonwealth Games; and scrutinised the Scottish Government's budget.

Presiding Officer's agenda for parliamentary reform

3. In line with the agenda for the reform of parliamentary business during Session 4, as set out by the Presiding Officer Tricia Marwick MSP, we have been eager to develop new ways of making our work more relevant and accessible. We have taken this approach on board while conducting our work over the period.

Inquiries and reports

Inquiry into education attainment of looked after children

4. We published our report on this inquiry in May 2012. Leading on from this inquiry, we agreed to undertake a further inquiry, examining the decision making processes on whether to take children into care.

Inquiry into decision making on whether to take children into care

5. To launch this inquiry, the Convener visited Barnardo's Scotland Fostering and Adoption Service on 26 June 2012. This visit attracted considerable press coverage.

6. As part of this inquiry we conducted a series of external visits prior to taking formal oral evidence. We met—

- children with experience of the care system;
- a group of parents with learning disabilities;
- professionals working as part of a project in Glasgow that takes an innovative approach to ensuring that looked after children reach settled, permanent solutions quickly;
- the Chairs of Child Protection Committees; and
- decision makers from a high performing local authority.

7. We also adopted an innovative approach to the latter part of the inquiry, publishing an interim report covering aspects of the work undertaken before taking oral evidence on other areas. This generated further debate on the issues raised by the inquiry, and increased press and public awareness of the work of the Committee. The inquiry has also been directly responsible for generating action on specific points by the Scottish Government and other decision making bodies.

One-off evidence sessions

8. In Spring 2012, we held several one-off evidence sessions on a wide range of education-related issues before arranging for the Cabinet Secretary to give evidence (“end of term catch-up”). The session with the Cabinet Secretary took a slightly different format to a normal committee meeting. The meeting was split into six sections, with the Cabinet Secretary answering questions on each in turn. Stakeholders were encouraged to submit questions to us in advance of this session. This was a useful process as it not only allowed us to scrutinise the Scottish Government, but also ensure stakeholders’ views were considered as part of this process.

Draft Budget 2013-2014

9. We agreed to focus our scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2013-14 on how the previous year’s final allocations helped the Scottish Government to deliver its policy objectives; what progress remains to be made and how the allocations in the current year’s draft budget will help to achieve that; and how spending on further and higher education is contributing to the Scottish Government’s overarching purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth. We took evidence from a range of stakeholders and academics and concluded by taking evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Bills

Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill

10. During the reporting year, we considered the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1. We received written submissions from a number of key stakeholders, and took oral evidence on 15 January, 22 January, 5 February, and 19 February 2013. We then published our Stage 1 report on 20 March 2013. While we broadly welcomed the general principles of the Bill, a minority of our members

expressed concerns about whether the general principles of the Bill would be achieved by this legislation, and the specific means by which the Bill would achieve some of these principles. We asked the Cabinet Secretary for further information to provide reassurance on the approach being taken.

Subordinate legislation and UK legislation

11. During the parliamentary year, we considered 13 Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs): 2 under the affirmative procedure and the remaining 11 under the negative procedure.

12. We also considered a legislative consent memorandum (LCM) on the UK Children and Families Bill.

Petitions

13. We considered petition PE1391 from the Renfrewshire Parent Council Forum calling for the protection of the right of children to be taught by qualified teachers for 25 hours a normal school week. We agreed to close the petition following correspondence from the Scottish Government.

14. We considered petition PE1409 from ENABLE Scotland on the issue of training for education staff on learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders. We agreed to close the petition and to write to the National Implementation Board and the General Teaching Council for Scotland about the issues it raised.

15. We also considered petition PE1420 from Clacks Kinship Carers and agreed to consider the petition in the context of our future consideration of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

Equalities

16. In recognition of the Parliament's commitment to mainstreaming equalities, we highlight that we met children with experience of the care system and a group of parents with learning disabilities, and raised their concerns directly with key decision makers. Beyond this, the Committee has endeavoured to incorporate the views, written and oral, of stakeholders from a wide cross-section of the population throughout all its work.

Meetings

17. During the parliamentary year, we met 27 times. Of these meetings, 5 were held entirely in private. 14 meetings were held partly in private. Meetings were held in private or partly in private in order to consider draft reports or work programme papers. All our formal meetings were held in Edinburgh.

Members who would like a printed copy of this *Numbered Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

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