

PE2142/A: Review the policy on school commencement and deferred school entry in Scotland

Scottish Government written submission, 7 May 2025

Thank you for writing to the Scottish Government, seeking its view of PE2142: Review the policy on school commencement and deferred school entry in Scotland. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the policy on school commencement and deferred school entry in Scotland and seek to reverse the potential harms caused by existing processes that have resulted in 19-month school year groups.

The Scottish Government's approach on pupil's entry to school and the right of parents in legislation to defer entry school starting date has been a longstanding feature of the Scottish education system. Many parents value the choice this gives them, particularly where they feel more time within an early years and childcare setting is more appropriate for their child's needs.

Teachers also have a responsibility to ensure that all children in their care are given the attention and work appropriate to their age and circumstances. Classes, irrespective of their composition, are made up of a number of individuals whose particular needs and attributes should be addressed. Teachers are professionally skilled in delivering effective education, whether or not they are teaching a class with pupils of a range of ages. The Scottish Government's view is that the quality of the teacher and the organisation of the class to meet the range of children's learning needs are more important factors in the success of children, than the classes themselves.

It is also the case that under Curriculum for Excellence practitioners are empowered to design curriculum in best way to meet all learners' needs. The framework is designed to be flexible in order to permit careful planning for those with differing needs, including those who, for example, have a learning difficulty and those who are particularly able or talented. As a result, meeting different learners' needs within a single class cohort is already built into the principles and practices of curriculum design.

We do of course keep such matters under review, and I would be happy to look at this issue again if evidence of significant harm to pupils was to emerge.

I hope the Committee finds this letter helpful in setting out the Scottish Government's position on school commencement and deferral.

Yours sincerely

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MINISTER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE PROMISE