



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Education Children and Young People Committee

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP

T3.60

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

The Scottish Parliament

Scottish Government

Edinburgh

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By email only—

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Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing to follow up on your evidence session on the budget 2023/24 at the meeting of the Education, Children and Young People Committee on [22 February](#).

At the meeting, you offered to provide written details to the Committee on the agreement made with COSLA in relation to the additional £145.5 million funding given to local authorities in 2022/23 for teachers and pupil support staff (col 5). The Committee asks you to provide this information and any written evidence held by the Scottish Government of its interactions with COSLA in relation to the agreement on the use of the funding.

On 7 February, you made a statement to Parliament about the additional annual funding of £145.5 million being provided for increased teacher numbers and support staff in 2023/24; if this is not delivered, the Scottish Government will withhold or recoup funding allocated for these purposes.

The Committee asks you to set out the strategic intent for the use of this funding, particularly given the differing circumstances in local authorities and demographic changes across the country.

In evidence you acknowledged there may be a need to take exceptional circumstances experienced by local authorities into account when considering the use of the additional funding and whether to apply penalties in relation to teacher and support staff numbers (cols 14, 15, 20).

The Committee acknowledges that some local authorities are experiencing a decrease in school rolls, whilst others have increasing pupil rolls; some local authorities might need more classroom assistants rather than teachers. The Committee believes that there should be an element of flexibility in how the funding can be used.

Some local authorities have seen a reduction in challenge authority funding following changes in the way that attainment challenge funding is allocated. In its [report](#) on the Scottish Attainment Challenge inquiry, the Committee said:

‘The Committee notes the evidence received on the impact of the reduction in funding to the challenge authorities. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government works with local authorities to examine and monitor the impact of the tapered reduction in funding on the challenge authorities and reports its findings to the Committee, along with any proposed action to mitigate any detrimental impact.’

The Committee asks you to provide an update on this recommendation and how the impact of this change in funding model is being measured.

The Committee is keen to ensure that there is fairness and consistency in how local authorities are treated in relation to the additional £145.5m funding, especially where funding is to be withheld or recouped by the Scottish Government. The Committee asks you to provide details of which exceptional circumstances will be taken into account and how flexibility will be achieved. In particular, the Committee would ask you to set out the circumstances in which the Scottish Government would not be minded to penalise local authorities by withholding or recouping the funding.

At the meeting, you told the Committee that on receiving census data on teacher numbers in December, you raised concerns with COSLA. However, in its [letter to the Committee of 16 February](#), COSLA said that the Scottish Government and COSLA did not agree to use the census as a benchmark to monitor the use of the £145.5m. The Committee asks you to set out what was agreed with COSLA in relation to monitoring teacher and support staff numbers following receipt of the additional funding. The Committee also asks you to set out how the Scottish Government will monitor the use of the funding in 2023/24.

In particular, the Committee is keen to establish the baseline which is being used to measure progress on teacher and support staff numbers. At the meeting, you offered to provide information about how the non-recurring funding of July and August 2020 and March 2021 has been spent and its impact on teaching and support staff numbers (including whether this has led to temporary or permanent teacher and teaching assistant posts being created or filled) (col 12).

In its correspondence with the Committee of 16 February, COSLA indicated that it has not been possible to reach an agreement with teaching unions in relation to a

reduction in class contact time. COSLA said that further work is required across all parties. The Committee asks you to set out the next steps in relation to this work.

Finally, the Committee notes that the most recent [school support staff statistics](#) were published today; the Committee asks you to provide comments on these statistics, in the context of the issues covered in this letter.

I would be grateful if the Scottish Government could provide a response within one month of the date of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Webber MSP

Convener