



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
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Scottish Government	

By email only—

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9 February 2023

Dear Cabinet Secretary and Minister,

### **Budget 2023/24**

I am writing on behalf of the Education, Children and Young People Committee regarding your evidence session on the 2023/24 budget on 18 January. The Official Report of the meeting can be found [here](#); relevant column numbers are set out below.

### **Early learning and childcare (ELC)**

The Minister for Children and Young People gave a commitment to provide the Committee with updates on engagement with Scottish Social Services Council on the provision of data on the movement of staff across the early learning and childcare sector (cols 4-5). The Committee asks the Minister to provide a timescale for the completion of this work.

The Minister and Eleanor Passmore (Scottish Government) referred to a health check on the overall financial sustainability of the sector and the wider review of the

rate-setting process, which is being carried out jointly with COSLA (cols 5-6). The Committee asks the Minister to provide updates on this work as it progresses and, again, requests that the Scottish Government provides a timescale for this work.

The Minister referred to data-sharing arrangements which will allow local authorities to access data needed to identify families eligible for funded places for two-year olds. The Minister offered to update the Committee on the impact of these new arrangements on uptake of places in due course (col 7).

During the meeting, the Minister was asked about the provision of funded ELC places across local authority boundaries (for example, where parents/carers live within one local authority but are seeking a place in another area due to the location of their workplace). Eleanor Passmore said that the Scottish Government expects local authorities to work together to resolve cross-border issues but gave a commitment to come back to the Committee on what further work might be necessary to ensure that this is happening (cols 9-10).

### **Staff in schools**

At the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary referred to the Government commitment to have 3,500 additional teachers and 500 additional support staff by the end of this parliamentary session. The Scottish Government has provided £145.5 million per year to local authorities for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to recruit additional teachers and support staff.

In the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary expressed concern about the lack of progress on teacher numbers and referred to discussions with COSLA in relation to what can be expected to be delivered with the £145.5 million funding. The Cabinet Secretary offered to come back to the Committee following these discussions (col 14). The Committee asks the Cabinet Secretary whether local targets have been set for increases in FTE staff and requests details of any route map agreed with local authorities.

In the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary referred to separate ASN funding of £15 million, announced in 2019, for councils to expand on the number of pupil support assistants working in Scotland's classrooms. The Committee asks the Cabinet Secretary to provide details of progress made in relation to the number of pupil support assistants in our schools for 2022/23 and what targets have been set for 2023/24. The Committee asks the Scottish Government to set out how it is monitoring the use of the £15 million by local authorities (col 12).

It would also be helpful if the Cabinet Secretary could set out how the annual £145.5 million funding (for 2022/23 and 2023/24) and the £15 million (announced in 2019) are intended to work together, given that they can both be used for expanding the number of support staff.

On 7 February, the Cabinet Secretary made a statement about the additional annual funding of £145.5 million being provided for increased teacher numbers and support staff. In the year ahead (2023/24), if this is not delivered by a local authority, the Scottish Government will withhold or recoup funding allocated for these purposes.

I would ask the Cabinet Secretary to write to the Committee setting out how many additional staff are expected to be appointed in 2023/24 and providing details on how the Scottish Government can have confidence that the funds will be used for their intended purpose of increasing FTE staff.

In the statement, the Cabinet Secretary also said that regulations will be introduced under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to specify the minimum number of learning hours per year.

It would be helpful if the Cabinet Secretary could share the letter to COSLA and individual local authorities of 7 February which sets out the details on teacher and support staff numbers, and next steps on learning hours.

### **Behaviour in schools**

At the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary offered to provide further details of the most recent meeting of the Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools and what plans the group has in relation to tackling challenging behaviour in schools (cols 16-17).

### **Free school meals**

The Cabinet Secretary offered to provide further information on the £30 million allocated to the expansion of free school meals in 2022/23 and details of what has been achieved with that funding (cols 19-20).

### **International Education Strategy**

In the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary was asked about the structural reliance of Scotland's higher education funding model on international fees. The Committee notes that a new strategy for international education is currently being developed and asks the Cabinet Secretary to set out a timescale for its publication.

### **Colleges**

At the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary was asked about the increase in the resource budget of £26 million for colleges in 2023/24. The Committee asks the Cabinet Secretary to provide details of how the £26 million will be used. The resource spending review set out a five-year flat cash settlement for colleges. Given that an additional £26 million has been allocated for 2023/24, the Committee asks the Cabinet Secretary to set out what this means for baseline funding for colleges in future years.

The Committee would also highlight the disparity in reimbursement rates between colleges and universities and the role of colleges in working with people from SIMD20 backgrounds and assisting people in accessing higher education. I would ask the Cabinet Secretary to set out what the Scottish Government is doing to ensure that colleges continue to play a role in meeting their targets despite the substantial economic challenges they face.

### **Further evidence**

The Cabinet Secretary has agreed to provide further evidence on the budget for 2023/24 to the Committee on 22 February. The Committee therefore requests a response to this letter by Thursday 16 February or earlier if possible.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Webber MSP

Convener