

8 February 2019

Dear Colleague

Some of you will be aware of the Education Reform - Joint Agreement between the Scottish Government and Local Government (represented by COSLA) published in June 2018. The Joint Agreement recognises that establishing an empowered system, which includes schools, teachers, pupils and parents, is crucial in improving the life chances of our children and young people.

As Chief Inspector of Education, I have the privilege of being the independent chair of the Steering Group tasked to take this work forward, to put in place what is needed to ensure empowerment takes place at all levels of our system. A broad range of bodies are engaged in developing the school empowerment agenda through their representation on the Steering Group. They include national and local government, professional associations, Education Scotland, ADES and other key stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the progress we are making.

The Joint Agreement is based on the key principles that schools are empowered to make the decisions that most affect outcomes for their young people. The rationale is to ensure that decisions that affect learning and teaching are taken as close to the learner as possible, to ensure that needs are met and that impact on learners is high. An empowered system is built on mutual trust, cooperation and highly effective communication. Progress towards empowerment should enable the system to be more responsive, decisive and agile when meeting individual and local needs.

At the heart of this system change is the development of teacher agency and professional voice; and ensuring that professional leadership and reflective practice are the key drivers for Scottish education. Successfully taking forward such an empowerment agenda will require universal engagement.

The empowered system diagram attached recognises all parts of the system – including teachers, learners, parents and carers, support staff and stakeholders who all have a role in delivering an empowered system for all of our young people.

This week we have [published some early work](#) to explain how we envisage an empowered system in Scotland could be supported. We are working towards a suite of guidance and materials for all engaged with education to support the whole system change required to achieve empowerment.

The materials released this week are those under the School Leaders section, and contain jointly agreed materials, including:

- The Headteachers' Charter for School Empowerment, which sets out the key elements of the role of headteachers in an empowered system; and
- Principles for School Leaders, which support the culture of empowering school leaders.

This section will be further developed with examples of effective practice through the coming year. These materials should give everyone a flavour of the approach being adopted around this agenda.

Work is underway to populate the other sections of the document, involving practitioners, consultation groups, working parties and collaborative events being organised to ensure support and guidance is available to all.

An empowered system will grow stronger and more confident when we work in partnership to achieve it. We must ensure our learning involves looking outwards to learn from others locally, regionally and nationally. Many of you are actively engaged in this collaboration and benefitting from being able to work with others across your Regional Collaboratives and with schools and professionals in other areas. I am confident that this experience will continue across the country to help us develop a system that supports all learners.

You may wish to consider these first steps towards an empowered system by reflecting and discussing this first release of materials with your teams, learners and parent bodies. The following prompts may help structure your discussions:

- Where am I/are we on the journey of empowerment?
- Where do I/ we see our school?
- What does teacher agency look like?
- How can I/we ensure we develop an ethos of teacher agency?
- What do we need to do to be ready for a more empowered system?
- What needs to change?

I continue to be impressed by the commitment and expertise of all who work in Scottish Education and look forward to engaging with you over the coming months regarding these materials.

I ask that headteachers, share this letter with your staff team, and discuss the questions above, developing teacher agency that will ensure we grow as a learning system.

Kind regards,



Gayle Gorman
HM Chief Inspector of Education

AN EMPOWERED SYSTEM

An empowered system grows stronger and more confident, working in partnership to lead learning and teaching that achieves excellence and equity for all learners. Empowerment and collaboration for improvement happen at all levels of the system.

