

National Improvement Framework Seminar

16 January 2016

AIMS OF THE SESSION

- ☐ To understand the policy background to the National Improvement Framework – including the recent OECD report on Curriculum for Excellence.
- ☐ To recognise the core principles applied by the NASUWT in its assessment of the National Improvement Framework.
- ☐ To consider some of the key themes in the Framework and their implications for teachers, school leaders and learners.

NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK – BACKGROUND

- ❑ Development of a National Improvement Framework a core commitment in the Scottish Government Programme for Government.
- ❑ Education moving up the political agenda in the run up to elections later this year and the work undertaken by the OECD on the education system.
- ❑ Draft published in November for consultation – NASUWT submitted a detailed response.
- ❑ Final version published in January 2016.
- ❑ Some helpful changes of emphasis in the final version but the fundamentals of the Framework remain unchanged.

NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK – BACKGROUND

- ❑ Meta-framework may be helpful given disjointed approach to policy development in the past (e.g. CfE, qualifications reform).
- ❑ Opportunity to develop a more coherent approach to the development of policy.
- ❑ Need to recognise that while there are clear challenges in the Framework, it also creates important opportunities for teachers and school leaders.
- ❑ The Framework is relatively broad – many details still need to be finalised.
- ❑ The NASUWT will continue to engage actively with the Scottish Government and other national bodies on the detail of the Framework – the effectiveness of the Framework will depend on getting this detail right.

THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION

- ❑ The Framework is an attempt to take forward the Scottish Government's priorities for the education system, namely:
 - improving the attainment of all Scottish pupils, especially in reading, writing and mathematics;
 - closing the attainment gap between the most and the least disadvantaged children;
 - improving children and young people's health and wellbeing;
 - securing better school leaver destinations for all young people.

NASUWT PRINCIPLES

- ❑ NASUWT shares the ambitions for the Scottish Government for the education system.
- ❑ But must be based on an understanding of the strengths of the education system – if the Framework is portrayed as a response to failure, it will not be successful.
- ❑ Children and young people learn best when teachers and school leaders can concentrate on their core responsibilities for teaching and leading teaching and learning – excessive workload burdens are a barrier to this.
- ❑ Teachers and school leaders need effective pay and terms and conditions in order to meet the needs of learners – since 2011, the Scottish Government has failed this critical test.

BUILDING ON THE STRENGTHS OF SCOTLAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

- ❑ OECD report, *Improving Schools in Scotland*, published in December 2015.
- ❑ Sets out clearly that Scotland's education system has many strengths:
 - levels of achievement are above international averages in science and reading;
 - achievement levels are spread relatively equally;
 - Scottish pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly 'resilient';
 - Scotland's schools are inclusive and meet the needs of a broad range of pupils;
 - clear positive trends in attainment and improving learner destinations;
 - children display positive attitudes and schools work well to address the wellbeing risks faced by children and young people.

BUILDING ON THE STRENGTHS OF SCOTLAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

- ❑ OECD report - some key themes in the report include:
 - acceleration of progress on CfE implementation;
 - CfE becoming less about a process and more about teaching and learning in the classroom;
 - need to improve the work in the 'middle tier' between schools and national bodies – issues for local authorities;
 - create a 'new narrative' for CfE – still some confusion about what 'CfE' is exactly!
 - greater emphasis on the use of data to inform decisions about teaching and learning.

NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK – MAIN ISSUES

- ❑ The National Improvement Framework - six key NASUWT areas of interest:
 - school self-evaluation;
 - parental involvement;
 - local authorities;
 - school leadership;
 - teacher professionalism;
 - assessment of pupil progress and achievement.

SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- ❑ The National Improvement Framework will introduce a statutory requirement on schools to self-evaluate and use the outcomes of this evaluation to report on achievement against priorities.
- ❑ Experience gained elsewhere highlights workload risks.
- ❑ Placing *How Good is Our School* Framework on a statutory footing could create significant burdens in schools.
- ❑ Scottish Government has pledged to consult on this issue – NASUWT will engage fully with this process.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- ❑ Original draft of the Framework stated that schools would be required to work with parents to develop school improvement plans.
- ❑ Some revision of this position in final Framework document.
- ❑ NASUWT believes that engagement of parents in the life of schools is critical – however, so are the principles upon which this engagement is based.
- ❑ Serious reservations about the extent to which existing arrangements for parental engagement are appropriate.
- ❑ NASUWT continues to make clear that parental engagement must not undermine legitimate control of teachers and school leaders over professional issues.
- ❑ Parental engagement must also look beyond narrow measures of pupil and school performance – must take into effective account the full range of work that schools undertake with their pupils.

LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSIBILITIES

- ☐ Much greater focus on local authority self-evaluation and reporting on progress.
- ☐ Need to make sure that this does not lead to tasks being passported down to individual schools.
- ☐ Pick up the concerns expressed by the OECD on the effectiveness of local authority engagement in the processes of change – a significant concern for NASUWT members.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

- ❑ Clear focus in the strategy on the need to develop leadership skill and capacity across the system.
- ❑ Emphasis on more teachers meeting Standards for Headship and Standards for Leadership and Management.
- ❑ The NASUWT concerned to ensure that school leaders are supported effectively – need to emphasise skills and understandings around managing resources, industrial relations, curriculum and qualifications change.
- ❑ The NASUWT will continue to engage with SCEL and other relevant national bodies on leadership issues.

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

- ❑ Broadly positive agenda on teacher professionalism in Scotland – Donaldson review is important in this context.
- ❑ The NASUWT is clear that the Scottish Government's ambitions for the education system will not be realised unless there is genuine respect for the professionalism of teachers and school leaders.
- ❑ Important themes in the document include:
 - greater emphasis on acquisition of Masters level (SCQF Level 11) qualifications;
 - how well teachers and school leaders can access the training and development they need;
 - PRD and PU – does this support an approach to professional development that reflects the professional status of teachers and engages them effectively in the process – is professional development something that is 'done to' teachers or 'done with' them?

ASSESSMENT OF PUPILS' PROGRESS

- ☐ Introduction of a system-wide framework of standardised assessment.
- ☐ Framework emphasises that these tests will inform rather than determine teacher assessment.
- ☐ Scottish Government has continued to state that it does not want tests to lead to the introduction of performance tables for schools – but this remains a legitimate concern.
- ☐ Concern that third-parties could use freedom of information requests to construct their own crude league tables.
- ☐ Not clear how these results would sit alongside existing teacher assessments or how they would be used in inspection or by local authorities to form judgements about schools.
- ☐ Future role of tests organised by local authorities is not clear.