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## Education, Children and Young People Committee

# Annual Report 2021 - 2022



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# Education, Children and Young People Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and matters relating to the Historical Abuse Inquiry within the responsibility of the Deputy First Minister.



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# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Sue Webber**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Deputy Convener**  
**Kaukab Stewart**  
Scottish National Party



**Stephanie Callaghan**  
Scottish National Party



**Graeme Dey**  
Scottish National Party



**Bob Doris**  
Scottish National Party



**Ross Greer**  
Scottish Green Party



**Ruth Maguire**  
Scottish National Party



**Michael Marra**  
Scottish Labour



**Oliver Mundell**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Willie Rennie**  
Scottish Liberal  
Democrats

# Scope of this Report

1. This annual report covers the period of 13 May 2021 to 12 May 2022.

## At a glance



Source: Scottish Parliament

## At a glance (cont.)



Source: Scottish Parliament

## Introduction

2. In the last year, the Committee has looked at a wide range of issues affecting children and young people in Scotland, including the impact of the pandemic and education reform.
3. As a Committee, we have always ensured that our work is informed by stakeholders. During this parliamentary year, we have used different approaches to support our engagement including—
  - call for views, which ask people to respond to questions in writing;
  - virtual meetings, allowing people to speak to us from their homes or offices; and, from the early part of 2022,
  - getting out and about again to meet people in locations to suit them.
4. Since we have been able to meet with people in person, the Committee has been able to visit two schools and a third sector organisation to hear from young people, parents, carers and teaching staff.
5. This report provides a summary of the key activities we have undertaken since May 2021. Full details of our work, including copies of Committee papers, reports and focus group notes, can all be found on our [Committee web-page](#).

## Membership Changes

6. The following members left the Committee during this reporting period—
  - James Dornan MSP (Committee Member 17 June 2021 to 31 March 2022)
  - Fergus Ewing MSP (Committee Member 17 June 2021 to 31 March 2022)
  - Beatrice Wishart MSP (Committee Member 17 June 2021 to 31 August 2021)
7. The following members joined the Committee during this reporting period —
  - Graeme Dey MSP from 31 March 2022
  - Ruth Maguire MSP from 31 March 2022
  - Willie Rennie MSP from 31 August 2021

## Key Statistics

8. In the period covered by this report, the Committee met 27 times and considered items in private 45 times over 26 meetings.
9. We produced a [Stage one report](#) for the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill.



10. We also carried out work, looking at the following—
  - Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Alternative Certification Model.
  - Education reforms including the [OECD Report - Scotland Curriculum for Excellence into the future](#), and Professor Kenneth Muir's report [Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education](#).
  - The Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People including on children with additional support needs, care experienced children and young people who live in poverty.
  - Skills Alignment with business needs and
  - The Scottish Attainment Challenge.
11. The Committee also took evidence on issues such as—
  - Budget 2022- 2023;
  - Drink and needle spiking and
  - the implementation of the 1140 hours Early Learning and Childcare policy.
12. Alongside its work on primary legislation and its inquiries, the Committee also considered fifteen pieces of subordinate legislation and two Legislative Consent Memorandums (LCMs).
13. Of the fifteen Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs) considered by the Committee, six were considered under the affirmative procedure and nine under the negative procedure.
14. The first LCM related to the Advanced Research and Invention Bill. We published our [report](#) on 2 December 2021. Our second LCM concerned the British Sign Language Bill. The Committee published its [report](#) on this LCM on 22 April 2022.
15. Across all our work, the Committee received 128 submissions and heard evidence from 115 witnesses, for which we are profoundly grateful.

# Inquiries, Reports & Stand-alone Evidence Sessions

## Scottish Qualifications Authority and Alternative Certification Model

16. During this Parliamentary year, we considered the impact of the exam cancellations and the alternative certification process that the SQA put in place.
17. In September 2021 the Committee heard informal evidence from young people on their experience of the 2021 Alternative Certification Model (AMC) used to assess pupils in the Senior Phase of school, focussing on what lessons can be learned from the experience.
18. We also heard young people's ideas on how assessment arrangements could be improved in the coming year. The evidence we heard from the young people was incorporated in the papers for the [Committee meeting on 22 September 2021](#).
19. The Committee heard evidence from representatives of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and Trade Union representatives at its [meeting on 22 September](#).
20. Following this, at its [meeting on the 29th September](#), the Committee took evidence from the SQA.

## Education Reforms

### **OECD Report: Scottish Curriculum for Excellence into the future**

21. At our meeting on [8 September](#) the Committee heard from representatives of the OECD who were involved in producing the [OECD Report - Scotland Curriculum for Excellence into the future](#).
22. Following publication of this report, the Scottish Government announced that it was looking at Education Scotland's role and looking to separate out the inspection role, to maximise its impact. <sup>1</sup>

### **OECD Report: Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland**

23. The Committee also took evidence from Professor Gordon Stobart, Emeritus Professor of Education, University College London at its meeting on [10 November](#). The focus of the session was a report Professor Stobart had completed for the OECD on '[Upper-secondary education assessment in Scotland: a comparative assessment](#)'.

### **Muir Report: Putting Learners at the Centre - Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education**

24. Professor Kenneth Muir was appointed as an independent advisor to the Scottish Government on some of the actions suggested by the OECD report, concerning the reform of the SQA and Education Scotland.

25. Professor Muir produced a report [Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education](#).
26. The Committee took evidence from Professor Muir and Professor Graham Donaldson, Honorary Professor, School of Education, University of Glasgow, at its meeting on [23 March](#).

### **Covid 19 - Impact on Children and Young People**

27. The Committee heard evidence to gain an understanding of the overall impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people, but with a focus on those who—
  - have additional support needs;
  - are care experienced; or
  - live in poverty.
28. The Committee heard evidence from a variety of organisations over three meetings in November and December—
  - [17 November 2021](#)
  - [24 November 2021](#)
  - [1st December 2021](#)

Following this, the Committee produced a [report](#) .

### **Skills Alignment with Business needs**

29. The Committee heard evidence from panels of witnesses at two meetings in December on the alignment of skills provision, via the education system, with the needs of businesses—
  - [8 December 2021](#)
  - [15 December 2021](#)
30. Following these sessions, the [Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills](#). The [Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training responded](#) to this letter, on behalf of the Scottish Government.

### **The Scottish Attainment Challenge**

31. A key aspect of the Committee's work during the first half of 2022 has been scrutiny of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and how the funds have been used to support children in areas of deprivation.
32. The Committee has heard evidence over six meetings and held six engagement sessions with parents, young people and teaching staff.
33. The Committee received [29 responses](#) to its call for views and took formal oral

evidence at the following meetings—

- [9 February 2022](#)
- [23 February 2022](#)
- [20 April 2022](#)
- [4 May 2022](#)
- [11 May 2022](#)
- [18 May 2022](#)

# Bills

## Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill

34. The Covid Recovery Committee was designated as the lead Committee to scrutinise the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill; however, given the range of Committee remits engaged by the Bill's provisions, several other Committees were also involved in Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill.
35. We scrutinised Part 2 of the Bill, which contains the provisions relating to education, taking evidence from a variety of stakeholders over two meetings, [2nd March](#) and [9th March](#).
36. The Committee published its [Stage 1 report](#) on 1 April and agreed that Stage 2 consideration of Part 2 will be carried out by the Covid Recovery Committee.

# One-off evidence sessions

## Drink and needle spiking

37. The Committee held a one-off session on the recent incidents of drink and needle spiking at its meeting on [26 January](#).
38. The session was held in a round-table format with the Committee hearing from a variety of organisations including representatives of the night-time industries, Victim Support Scotland, universities and Police Scotland.

## Covid and Schools January 2022

39. Due to an increase of Covid cases in January 2022, the Committee held a [one-off session](#) to understand how children, parents and staff were coping at the start of term and to ask whether any further measures were required.
40. At this session, the Committee heard from—
  - Association of Directors of Education (ADES),
  - the Association of Headteachers and Deputes in Scotland (AHDS),
  - Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA); and
  - the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS).

# Subordinate Legislation

41. This year, the Committee considered the following pieces of subordinate legislation—

## Affirmative:

- The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Order 2021
- Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Act 2021 (Form and Content of Waiver etc.) Regulations 2021
- Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Exceptions to Eligibility)(Scotland) Regulations 2021
- Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Payments Materially Affected by Error) (Scotland) Regulations 2021
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (Applications for Removal from List and Late Representations) Amendment Regulations 2021
- Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Reconsideration and Review of Determinations) (Scotland) Regulations 2022
- The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2022.

## Negative:

- SSI 2021/251: Registration of Independent Schools (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021
- SSI 2021/312 Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Reimbursement of Costs and Expenses) (Scotland) Regulations 2021
- SSI 2021/313 Redress for Survivors Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Payment of Legal Fees) (Scotland) Regulations 2021
- SSI 2021/333 Legal Aid and Advice and Assistance (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 2021
- SSI 2021/380 Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitory Provision) Regulations 2021
- SSI 2021/462. Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 2021
- SSI 2021/481 Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021
- SSI 2022/34 The Police Act 1997 and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (Fees) (Coronavirus) Amendment Regulations 2022

- SSI 2022/97 Police Act 1997 and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (Fees) (Coronavirus) Amendment Regulations
- SSI 2022/102 The Teachers' Pension Scheme (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2022



# Public Petitions

42. The Committee considered its four open petitions in May 2022—
- [PE1548: National Guidance on Restraint and Seclusion in Schools](#)
  - [PE1668: Improving literacy standards in schools through research-informed reading instruction](#)
  - [PE1692: Inquiry into the human rights impact of GIRFEC policy and data processing](#)
  - [PE1747: Adequate funding to support children with additional support needs in all Scottish schools.](#)
43. Following consideration of the petitions, the Committee agreed that petition PE1548 would remain open. The Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to seek an update on timescales for the publication of the guidance relating to these issues, which is being developed by a working group established by the Scottish Government
44. The Committee agreed to close petition PE1688 under Rule 15.7 of Standing Orders on the basis that it has no current plans to scrutinise initial training education. In doing so, the Committee agreed to consider the issues raised in the petition should it consider initial training education in future.
45. Petition PE1692 also remains open with the Committee agreeing to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to seek an update on timescales for the publication of guidance relating to these matters.
46. Petition PE1747 remains open. At its last consideration, the Committee agreed to consider the petition as part of a future work programme discussion.

## Informal engagement

47. Hearing from those with direct, lived experience is vital to form a picture of how a law, policy or practice is affecting different groups. We recognise that, for some people, a formal Committee meeting is not the most suitable way to share their experience. As a result, informal engagement is a crucial part of the Committee's work. This year has been no different.
48. Over the last year, our informal evidence sessions have allowed us to hear directly from—
  - Children and young people
  - Parents and carers
  - Teachers and teaching unions
  - Third sector organisations
49. This work has underpinned Committee inquiries, with informal in person and virtual engagement sessions being held for two of our inquiries—
  - Alternative Certification Model: four informal sessions with young people in S4 - S6
  - Scottish Attainment Challenge: six sessions, three online with parents, teachers and care experienced young people and three in-person with visits to a primary school, a third sector organisations centre and a secondary school.

## Web and Social Media

50. The Committee's Twitter account increased its use of short clips taken from Committee business, highlighting key contributors and allowing evidence to be shared directly with followers.
51. **11** such clips were shared on Twitter. Two of these clips were also shared on Facebook, where they accrued **6,400** impressions (i.e. were seen in the feed by **6,400** users) and **3,300** views in total.
52. On average, our tweets were seen 3,600 times and had an average of 114 engagements.

# Equal opportunities

53. The Committee is keen to ensure that hears from a diverse range of people and lived experiences when taking evidence. It therefore asks organisations to consider this when identifying people to speak to us.
54. The Committee has also been keen to draw on one of the few advantages of the pandemic, an increased ability to connect virtually, to allow us to hear more easily from people spread across the country.
55. As a result, when taking evidence on the Accredited Certification Model and on the Scottish Attainment Challenge, we were able to hear from—
- Care experienced young people facilitated by Who Cares? Scotland;
  - Pupils from Buchanan High School, Coatbridge which is a school for pupils with additional support needs;
  - Pupils from St Joseph's College, Dumfries.
  - Young carers facilitated by Carers' Trust Scotland
  - Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)
  - Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS) Young Advisers
  - Young people facilitated by Children in Scotland (CiS)
  - Pupils from Inverness Royal Academy, and
  - Pupils from Shawlands Academy on the ACM.
56. On the Scottish Attainment Challenge, we were able to speak to—
- children at Sidlaw View Primary School;
  - care experienced young people;
  - young people supported by Barnardo's in Greenock;
  - teachers across the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative (East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire); and
  - parents and carers from across the West Partnership area.
57. When considering its scrutiny on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people, the Committee agreed to focus on the impact that the pandemic has had on children and young people with additional support needs, care experienced young people, and children and young people living in poverty.
58. Following the publication of our report, we sought the views of children and young people, to ask what they thought about our conclusions and recommendations.

59. Based on advice from groups who support young people, we tailored our consultation for young people. We also used a digital platform which would be easier for young people and neuro-diverse young people to respond to, as it accepts responses in different formats. In addition, we produced a conversation guide to help organisations, who support young people, to help them facilitate discussions on the report and feedback their thoughts.

1 [Curriculum for Excellence: Scottish Government response to OECD Review](#)

