

Devolved School Management: New Guidelines

Introduction

The Scottish government has published new Devolved School Management (DSM) [Guidelines](#) on school funding decisions by local authorities

This joint COSLA/Scottish government guidance is part of the current Education Reform Programme which is still in place despite the recent announcement cancelling the proposed Education Reform Bill. This guidance replaces that published in 2012. Local Authorities are expected to use the new guidelines, and the accompanying Framework, to update their authority's Devolved School Management Scheme as quickly as possible, with full implementation expected by April 2021.

Devolved School Management

Devolved school management has been in place since 1993 with the aim of allowing some resources to be managed at school level. DSM was reviewed in 2006 and 2012. The Scottish government's plans to reform education include devolving more power from local authorities, including budgeting decisions, to headteachers and the introduction of a Headteachers Charter outlining their responsibilities. The new guidelines include the joint reform agreement between COSLA and the Scottish government. The draft charter was published in February and the next stages are outlined [here](#).

The guidance states that heads are required to:

- Play an active role in designing and reviewing recruitment and staffing approaches, both for their own school(s) and for the wider authority.
- Be empowered to design a staffing structure which best supports the school's curriculum and leadership requirements, working within their delegated staffing budget and supported by their local authority and Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) / Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers(LNCT) agreements and guidance.
- Be integral to the appointment of staff in accordance with the best interests of children and young people, and work in partnership with the local authority to ensure good practice in recruitment and appointments, in line with SNCT/LNCT agreements and guidance.

The focus of is on teachers with little mention of other school staff.

KEY POINTS:

- **The guidance replaces the Devolved School Management Guidance published in 2012**
- **Headteachers will be given more powers over budgets including staffing matters**
- **The implementation of the new guidance will be decided by local authorities. Branches are encouraged to start discussion with their employer.**



Contact UNISON's Bargaining & Campaigns team:

Kay Sillars
k.sillars@unison.co.uk

0141 342 2811
0845 355 0845

The Guidance

Subsidiarity and Empowerment

Here they lay out the principles and aims of the guidance. This section also states that in regard to staffing, heads can “design a staffing structure that best supports learning and teaching in the school within the budget delegated to the school by the local authority”. It also states that heads must comply with employment law and the “contractual obligations and policies of their local authority”. There is also a specific reference to agreements with teachers’ negotiating bodies: SNCT and LNCT. The guidance also states that the majority of budget decisions should be made at school level.

Staffing

The staffing section (page 17) focuses almost entirely on teachers. It states that local schemes are **expected** to “devolve the appropriate resources to schools” It is clear that all legislative and contracts still need to be met. The guidance makes clear that this includes agreements the local authority has signed, SNCT and LNCT agreements working time agreements and guidelines.

Head teachers are **expected** to design their own staffing structures within the budget delegated by the local authority. The guidance recommends that local authorities consider the risks associated with devolving staffing and consult on the risks associated with staffing allocations. Head teachers are **expected** to be actively designing and reviewing recruitment process and staffing approaches.

The guidance states that:

“It is expected that head teachers are consulted on the allocations of all staff groups to their schools, including support staff. Staffing allocations of support staff should be supported by a clear and transparent methodology for the distribution of staff either to schools or clusters”

It is therefore clear the changes to DSM could have a significant impact on the working lives of UNISON members in schools. The relationship between staff and the head will be very different going forward. This will also change the type of work that many administrative and clerical staff undertake and increase workloads. There may also be increased numbers of business managers in schools and increased workload for those already in place.

Finance

Heads are expected to be given the ability to carry forward under and overspends “in line with authority criteria”.

Stakeholder engagement

The Scottish government consulted with local authorities, head teachers and teaching unions and parent’s groups. They included Voice but not UNISON in the process. We did submit our concerns during the open consultation process. This is another example of employers “forgetting” that a whole team of staff including classroom assistants, technicians and administrative staff work together to deliver education not just teachers.

Action for Branches

Branches are encouraged to meet with their local authority as soon as possible to discuss how they will be implementing the changes to DSM. There is a clear list in the paper of expected and recommended sections of the guidance. There is also a list of areas which are not suitable for devolving and those like janitorial and cleaning costs which can be decided locally. Branches are also reminded that they can send a delegate to the Education Issues Group. For further information contact **k.sillars@unison.co.uk**

Further info

The new guidance

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/devolved-school-management-guidelines/>

Minister statement re Education Bill

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/ministerial-statement-update-scotlands-education-reforms/>

UNISON response to original reform proposals

<https://unison-scotland.org/education-reform-consultation/>

UNISON comments on head teachers’ charter

<https://unison-scotland.org/focus-children-not-structures-says-unison-response-headteachers-charter/>

UNISON Education Issues Group

<https://unison-scotland.org/service-groups-and-sectors/local-government/education-issues-group/>



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