



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Angela Constance,
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong
Learning,
Scottish Government

T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Direct Tel: 0131 348 5222
Fax: 0131 348 5600

ec.committee@scottish.parliament.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Angela,

On behalf of the Education and Culture Committee, I congratulate you on your recent appointment as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. We look forward to discussing over the coming months your priorities for education.

I am aware that your office has been informed of our work programme. However, I am writing now to highlight the Committee's ongoing work on the attainment gap in school. This matter is a clear priority for Scottish Ministers, as is evident from the Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2014-15 and subsequent statements by you.

Given this, the Committee intends to take evidence from the Scottish Government – and local authorities – in late 2015 on the outcomes of your efforts to improve attainment in school. This session is scheduled to be the final part of our three-strand approach to this issue. Details of the other two strands are available on our [website](#).

The Scottish Government has set out its ambition for raising attainment on its [website](#)—

“Our Ambition

To progressively reduce inequity in educational outcomes: consistently over an agreed period, to make progress in eroding the deeply embedded correlation found in the majority of Scottish schools between a child's relative point of social deprivation/affluence and their educational attainment.

To improve the public and parents' confidence in continuous improvement of Scotland's education system.

Raising the attainment of all Scotland's children and young people is a key priority. An explicit part of this is closing the equity gap and raising the attainment of children and young people suffering disadvantage."

In order to inform our work on the attainment gap, particularly the evidence session with the Scottish Government and COSLA, I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions. Your response will help us to understand the Scottish Government's expected outcomes in this area as we begin our work (we are not looking for a detailed update at this point on the specific initiatives being undertaken by the Scottish Government and others)—

- To what extent do you consider "inequity" can be reduced and the correlation between social deprivation/ affluence and educational attainment be eroded? How will we be able to measure whether the Scottish Government's and other bodies' efforts have been successful in this regard?
- What is the "agreed period" over which progress is to be made?
- How will you establish whether the public's and parents' "confidence in continuous improvement of Scotland's education system" has improved?
- The Scottish Government wishes to raise the attainment of all children and, explicitly, the attainment of "children and young people suffering disadvantage". If the attainment of all children rises, then it appears the attainment of those suffering disadvantage would have to rise faster in order for the equity gap to be closed. How is this to be achieved?

Yours sincerely,

STEWART MAXWELL MSP
CONVENER