

Aberdeen City Council

Devolved School Management Review Analysis June 2020

A review of the Devolved School Management Scheme was undertaken in light of refreshed Scottish Government Guidance. A range of informal engagement and consultation took place during the development stage. Formal consultation on a proposed new scheme took place between 14th and 29th May 2020

Responses were invited from staff and from parents/carers and pupils.

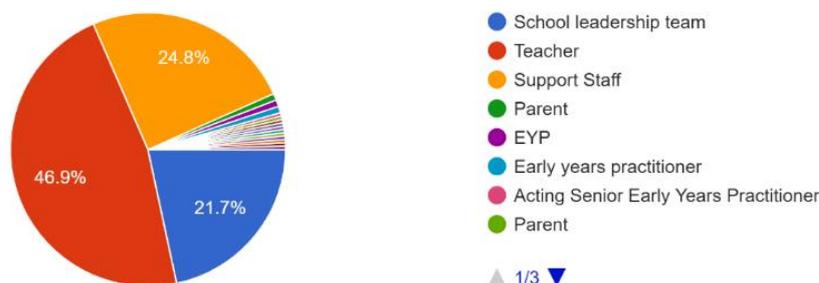
Section 1 - What did staff say?

254 survey responses were returned by staff.

In addition, emailed responses to the consultation were received from 3 secondary schools, the Aberdeen Secondary Head Teacher Association, 2 Parent Councils and 2 teaching trade unions.

Just under 47% of responses were from teaching staff although Pupil Support Assistants were well represented (just under 25%) and Early Years Practitioners accounted for just under 22% of responses.

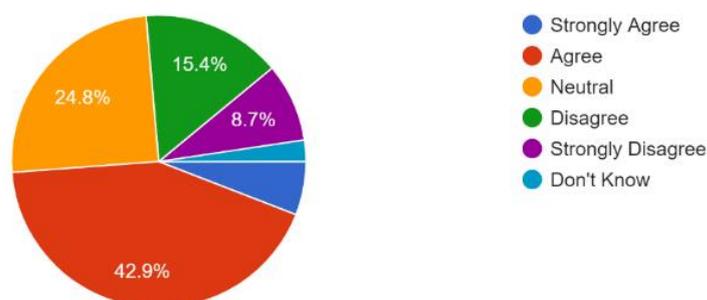
Your Role
254 responses



Just under 50% of respondents felt that the scheme was written in plain English and easy to understand, 25% submitted a neutral response with 24% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement.

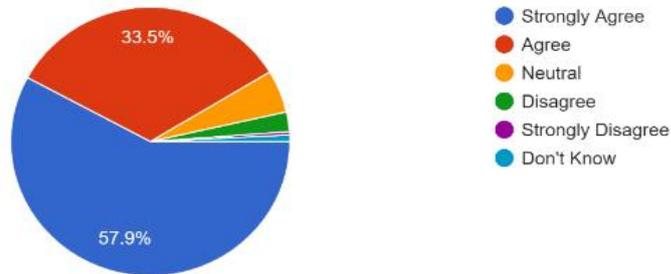
1. The DSM scheme and associated information is accessible and is written in plain language.

254 responses



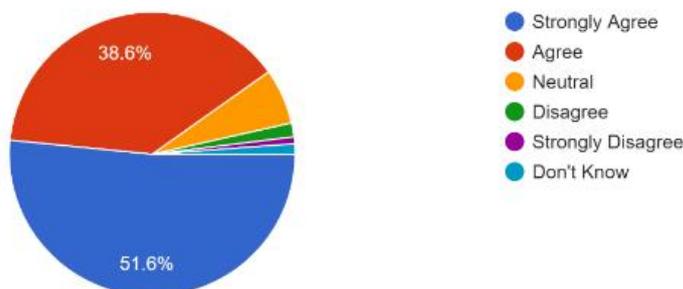
There was widespread agreement from over 90% that no Head Teacher should have a teaching commitment.

2a. Every school should have 1 fte Head Teacher with no teaching commitment
254 responses



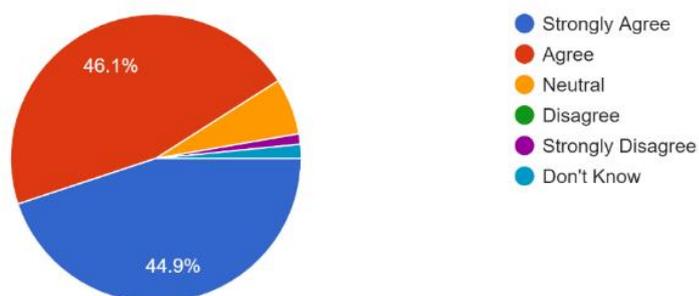
A similar number felt that staffing allocations should cover core teaching requirements and allocations for non-class contact time.

2b. Staffing allocation should cover core teaching requirements + NCCT
254 responses



91% of colleagues agreed it is essential to observe national and local staffing agreements.

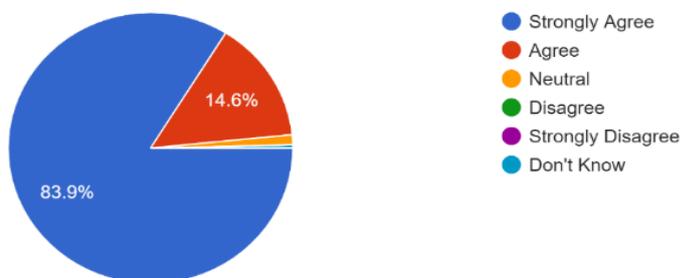
2c. National and local staffing agreements must be observed
254 responses



The requirement for all schools to have a dedicated allocation of Support for Learning drew strong agreement. This also came through in the comments submitted where free text was invited.

2d. Every school should have a dedicated allocation of SFL to enable them to meet the needs of their pupils

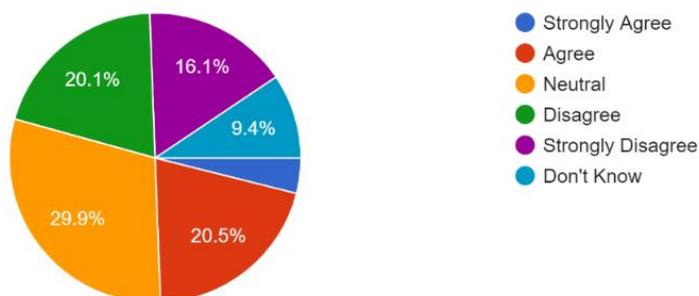
254 responses



The formula for the allocation of staff resource drew more mixed responses with just over 54% agreeing or offering a neutral response compared to just under 37% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the formula is fair and transparent. Closer scrutiny of the data would suggest that those working in a school where they are likely to benefit from the revised scheme were most likely to give a favourable response, which is perhaps unsurprising. Comments also indicated having an awareness of the number of different factors to be taken into account made it more difficult for people to quantify fairness.

3. The formula for allocation of staffing resources is fair and transparent.

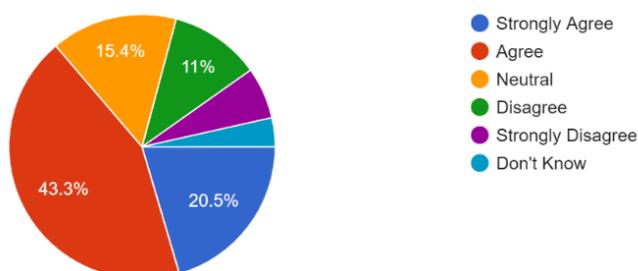
254 responses



The need for the formula allocation to reflect school roll and SIMD was largely agreed with. Only 11% of respondents disagreed.

4. It is appropriate that the allocation of resources to schools is calculated using a formula which takes account of school roll and SIMD.

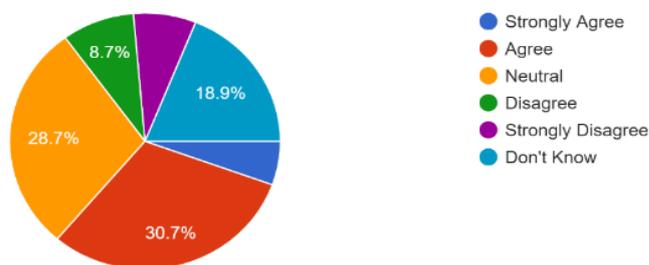
254 responses



The majority of respondents agreed or provided a neutral response when asked if the scheme reflected the principles of the Scottish Government guidance.

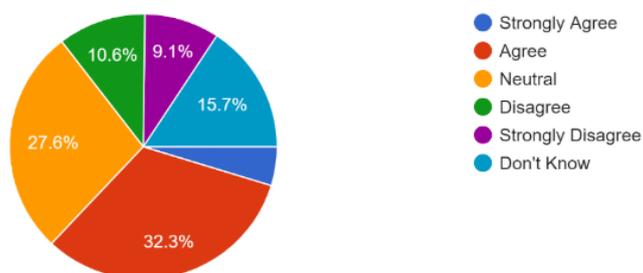
5a. The draft scheme meets the expectations set out in the Scottish Government guidance and reflects the principle of Subsidiarity and Empowerment

254 responses



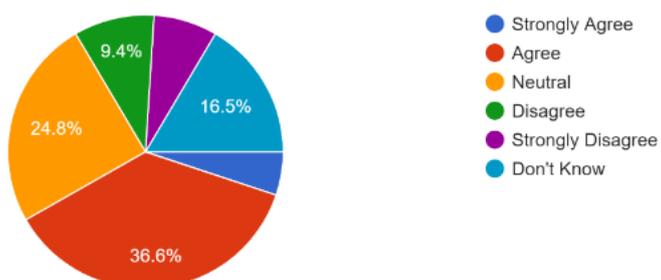
5b. The draft scheme meets the expectations set out in the Scottish Government guidance and reflects the principle of Collaboration

254 responses



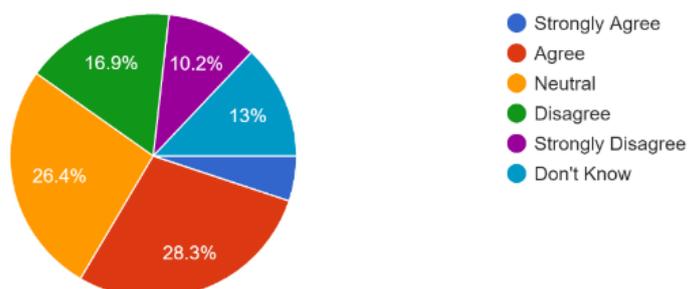
5c. The draft scheme meets the expectations set out in the Scottish Government guidance and reflects the principle of Accountability and Responsibility

254 responses



5d. The draft scheme meets the expectations set out in the Scottish Government guidance and reflects the principle of Clarity and Equity

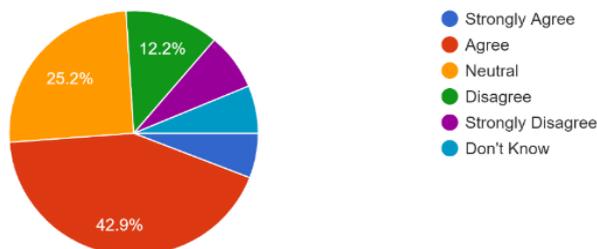
254 responses



49% of respondents felt that the scheme made the budget holder responsibilities clear.

6. The draft scheme makes it clear what the responsibility of budget holders is and is easy to follow.

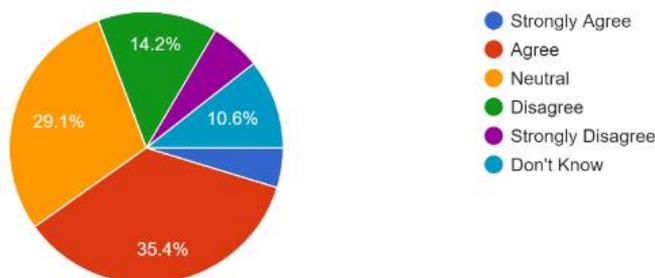
254 responses



40% of respondents feeling that the scheme would support collaborative decision making.

7. The principles set out in the draft scheme enable collaborative decision making at a local level.

254 responses



Summary analysis

Further scrutiny of the data shows that schools likely to benefit from the revised staffing formulae were more likely to respond favourably to the questions posed, which is unsurprising. 7 respondents noted that, although they disagreed with the new allocations, the formula was clear and transparent.

The Secondary HT association noted that, "There has been a need to review staffing allocations for many years and this has been under discussion for some time within ACC. The new formula avoids the historical ambiguities present in the previous formula."

34 responses expressed concern about the impact of the proposals on Principal Teacher posts, capacity to deliver a wide range of subjects and impact on smaller schools (3 of these were identical) 17 responses (3 of which were identical) expressed a view that the proposals were discriminatory towards small secondary schools.

17 responses noted that the timing of the consultation was unwelcome. It is accepted that the timing could have been improved although the need to work to budget set by Council in February necessitated introduction of a new scheme.

26 responses expressed a view that the proposals would impact negatively on supporting learners in terms both of meeting needs and raising attainment. 15 responses referred to reduced PSA hours in their school and a negative impact on equity, 11 responses expressed a view that the proposals discriminate against lower SIMD profile schools while 2 viewed them as discriminatory towards higher SIMD profile schools. 2 respondents noted the proposals shared resources more equitably.

6 respondents described the draft scheme as clear and concise, 10 felt the scheme lacked clarity.

14 responses questioned the inclusion of energy costs and SQA exam costs in the devolved budget, questioning the ability of schools and Head Teachers to control the former and expressing concern that including the latter in the devolved budget may lead to a reduction in opportunity and choice for young people.

31 responses were critical of perceived budget cuts and criticised the timing of this in view of the current pandemic.

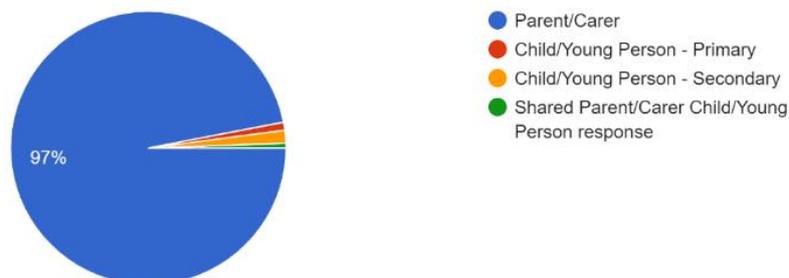
Analysis of returns from staff in schools who will see little change from the new scheme are broadly positive or neutral. Responses from schools which have historically had higher levels of resources than are proposed within the draft scheme were generally less positive.

Section 2 - What did parents, carers and pupils say?

526 responses were received. 97% of responses were from parents and carers, with the remaining responses from pupils. It is acknowledged that the subject matter does not easily translate for pupils and a limited number of responses is not surprising. This will be taken account of when planning future consultation around DSM.

Status

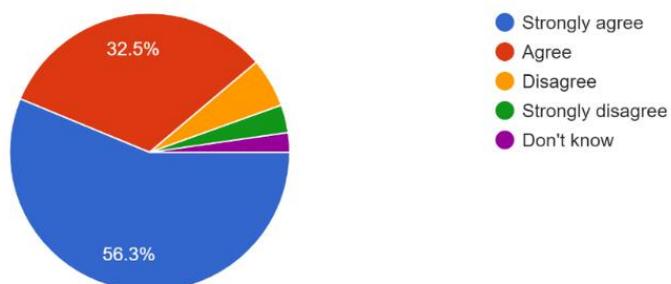
526 responses



Almost all respondents agreed that a Head Teachers should not be regularly expected to teach a class. This mirrors the views from staff.

Every school should have a Head Teacher who is not regularly expected to teach classes.

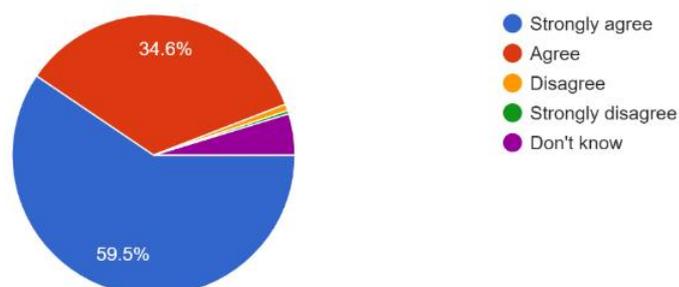
526 responses



94% of parents, carers and pupils agreed that staffing should be allocated in line with national and local staffing agreements.

Every school should be allocated staff in line with national and local staffing agreements.

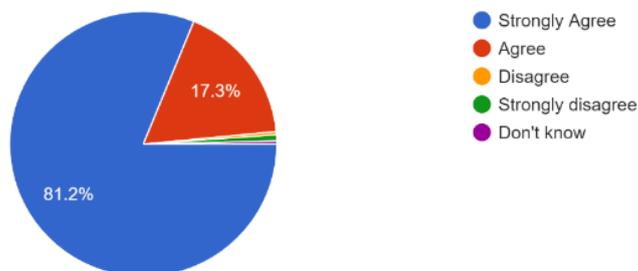
526 responses



98% agreed that school allocations of Support for Learning were necessary. The need for all schools to have an allocation of Support for Learning came consistently through the feedback from staff and parents/carers and pupils.

Every school should have a dedicated allocation of Support for Learning staff to allow them to support the needs of all their learners.

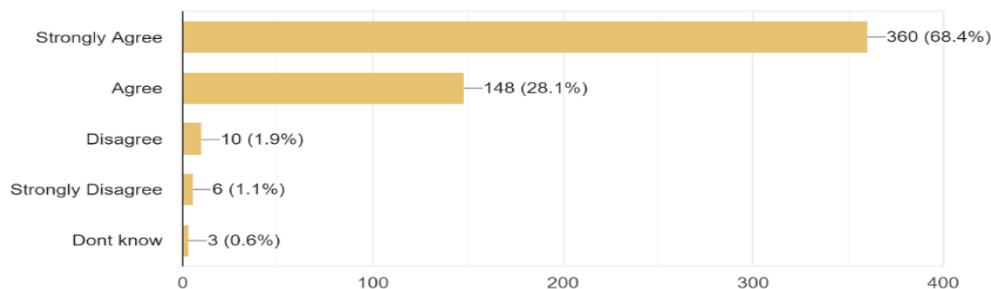
526 responses



Almost all parents, carers and pupils strongly agreed that the context of the school should take account of local circumstance.

The staffing allocation should take account of the number of pupils in the school and information about the school's community.

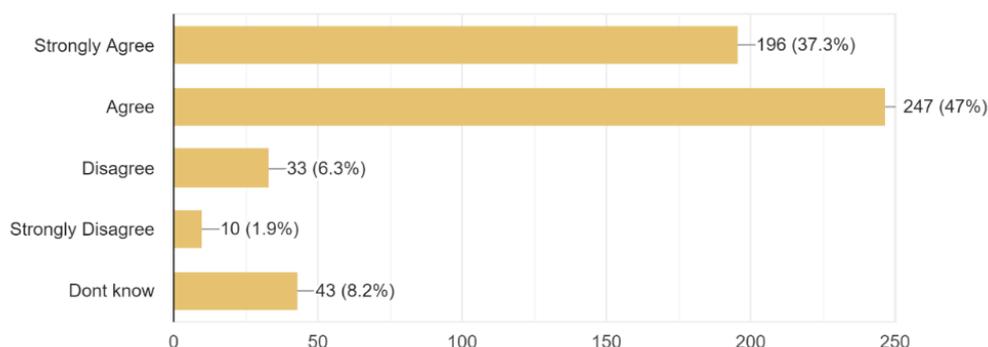
526 responses



Parents, carers and pupils almost all agreed that the guidance promotes shared decision making and welcomed this.

The DSM guidance promotes shared decision making with staff, parents, pupils and the wider community where appropriate.

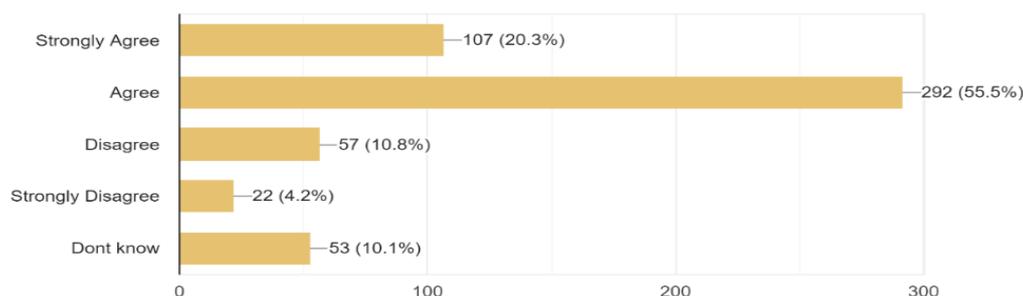
526 responses



75% of parents, carers and pupils feel that the scheme is clear and easy to understand.

The proposed scheme is clear and easy to understand.

526 responses



Summary analysis

From the additional comments provided, there appears to be some correlation of negative views with some of the school staff returns. This is unsurprising and may reflect comments from schools who are likely to see some budget reduction from a new scheme. 9 respondents referred specifically to removal of management posts or to managers teaching.

35 parent/carer responses expressed concern about the impact of the proposals on equity of provision, while 5 respondents welcomed the proposals.

Additional commentary from parents and pupils evidences a strong need to focus on allocations of support for learning to all schools to ensure the needs of those learners with additional support needs can be met. This features in around 30 responses

7 responses echoed the staff view that the timing of the consultation was not ideal. As noted previously this is accepted; but was unavoidable for the reasons stated.

15 responses expressed the view that DSM will add to Head Teachers' workload and a similar number made reference to a need for training and support to schools in dealing with DSM. It is possible that some of those responding are unaware of Head Teachers' current obligations in respect of DSM.

Including energy and exam costs in the devolved budget was raised as a concern by 11 respondents and mirrors the feedback from staff in this area.

399 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the draft scheme is clear and easy to understand, however a total of 31 responses refer to lack of clarity and transparency, use of jargon and a need for prior understanding to be able to make comparisons or comment. It is acknowledged that this is not an easy subject to make accessible to those without prior knowledge of it and this will be considered in any future consultation around DSM

While 5 respondents welcomed the involvement of parents in making decisions around use of funds, a similar number felt that teachers and Head Teachers are best placed to make such decisions.

22 responses criticised perceived budget cuts, suggesting schools need more funding not less.

Section 3 – Implications for the draft scheme

Rationale

In 2019 the Scottish Government instructed local authorities to review their Devolved School Management (DSM) schemes and published detailed guidance around the expectations of schemes, along with a framework for revised schemes to follow.

A working group comprising local authority officers and Head Teachers was established in November 2019 agreed there were some aspects of the existing arrangements which required to be addressed as part of the overall review of DSM. These included:

- Existing arrangements for deciding school staffing allocations lacked clarity and transparency
- There were a number of historical arrangements which were not all still relevant
- A presumption of mainstreaming had led to an increase in the number of pupils with additional support needs in almost all mainstream schools
- Significant lack of resource in some settings

Recommendations

Based on the feedback received it is recommended that the draft scheme should be adopted with the following considerations

- Energy costs should be removed from schools' devolved budget. Feedback supports the view that these costs are largely out with the control of the Head Teacher and the ability to control energy costs varies from school to school depending on the age and condition of the building
- SQA costs should be removed from the devolved budget. Feedback supports the view that including these could lead to reduced opportunities for young people to be presented for exams if financial concerns were a factor
- The DSM scheme includes staffing budgets which will be devolved within the parameters set out in the draft scheme
- Alternative spend requests in respect of staffing underspend will be approved if they support improvements to; the curriculum, learning and teaching, wellbeing or health and safety
- The DSM scheme is a cash-based scheme. Head Teachers working collegiately with their school communities have flexibility within this to create structures to suit their specific needs budget provided these are within budget and local and national agreements are observed
- Officers will work with Finance colleagues to ensure Head Teachers are provided with regular, accurate financial information and advice to enable them to monitor budgets effectively
- Consideration should be given to the timescale for implementation for any school likely to have to review their school structure to ensure that existing agreements for changing school structures can be adhered to
- In making any changes all local and national agreements (LNCT and SNCT) will be adhered to