REPORT TO: **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE – 25 APRIL 2016**

REPORT ON: **ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) POLICY ON THE 'REVIEW OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE'**

REPORT BY: **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE**

REPORT NO: **162-2016**

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform committee members of the recent report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Policy on the 'Review of the Curriculum for Excellence'.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended members of the Children and Families Services Committee:

i. note the key findings and recommendations in the OECD report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial requirements arising from the report.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 The OECD Policy Review was commissioned by the Scottish Government to inform the ongoing development of education policy, practice and leadership in Scottish education. The review provided an independent view of the impact and implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). The core focus of the review was the Broad General Education (i.e. the experience of pupils up from pre-school to S3 in secondary school). The OECD examined international and national evidence on quality and equity in Scottish education.

4.2 The review noted the following positive developments in Scottish education:

- Levels of academic achievement are above international averages in reading and sciences;
- Scottish schools are inclusive, they do well on measures of social inclusion and mix and Scottish immigrant children achieve higher levels of attainment than their non-immigrant peers;
- There are clear upward trends in attainment and positive destinations;
- The large majority of Scottish students hold positive attitudes towards their schools;
- Risk behaviour is improving with noticeable drops in teenage pregnancies and alcohol consumption; and
- Disruptive behaviour is in decline.

4.3 The review identified the following problems and challenges in Scottish education:

- Inspection reports show a minority of schools and early learning centres remain just at or below 'satisfactory;'
- There have been declining relative and absolute achievement levels in mathematics after having been one of the leading countries in mathematical achievement the decade before the 2012 PISA report;
- Declines are also observed in other data with smaller relative numbers of top reading performers among primary and secondary students, fewer scoring at the top in numeracy in primary schools and a larger number of lower performers in secondary

schools; and

- There are particular challenges confronting secondary schools with low attainment levels.

4.4   The OECD review reported that the Curriculum for Excellence is at a 'watershed' moment. CfE has been implemented through consensus with a wide range of stakeholders including Local Authorities. In the view of the OECD there is now a need for a bold approach that goes beyond system management to a new approach with a specific focus on teaching and learning. Although there has been widespread acceptance of CfE by teachers, the review concluded that the pace of implementation was variable. The review calls for a strengthened 'middle' involving collaboration among schools, local authorities and national agencies such as Education Scotland. The review suggested that CfE might be rebranded as the 'Curriculum for Excellence and Equity' or 'Raising Achievement and Attainment for All'.

4.5   The OECD developed a limited range of recommendations with a strong emphasis on closing the equity gaps and a move away from a curriculum programme managed at the centre toward an equitable curriculum being built in schools, networks and communities. The recommendations amount to extending greater powers to all levels including giving Local Authorities a more prominent role. The recommendations are attached as an appendix to the report (Appendix 1).

4.6   The council's strapline 'Raising Attainment and Achievement for All – Can do, Must do, Will do' meets the aspirations of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The two core outcomes within the city are to raise the attainment of all and to close the gap in education outcomes between children from the most and least advantaged backgrounds. Head teachers, Education Officers and other stakeholders work collaboratively in professional work streams to support implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence. Future progress reports on the OECD Review, as well as briefings, will be provided to committee members in relation to attainment and achievement, closing the attainment gap, learning and teaching standards and leadership. The OECD review is a helpful international and comparative perspective on the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence. The recommendations of the review have been welcomed by Scottish Government and other stakeholders.

5.0   POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1   This report has been screened for any implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environment assessment, anti-poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management.

5.2   There are no major issues.

6.0   CONSULTATION

6.1   The Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0   BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1   OECD Report.

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Summary of Recommendations from the OECD Report

The following recommendations are taken directly from the OECD Report:

- Be rigorous about the gaps to be closed and pursue relentlessly "closing the gap" and "raising the bar" simultaneously.

- Ensure a consolidated and evidence-informed strategic approach to equity policies.

- Develop metrics that do justice to the full range of CfE capacities informing a bold understanding of quality and equity.

- Create a new narrative for the *Curriculum for Excellence*.

- Strengthen the professional leadership of CfE and the "middle".

- Simplify and clarify core guidance, including in the definitions of what constitutes the *Curriculum for Excellence*.

- Focus on the quality of implementation of CfE in schools and communities, and make this an evaluation priority.

- Develop targeted, networked, evaluated innovation in secondary school learning environments to enhance engagement.

- Develop a coherent strategy for building teacher and leadership social capital.

- Develop an integrating framework for assessment and evaluation that encompasses all system levels.

- Strike a more even balance between the formative focus of assessment and developing a robust evidence base on learning outcomes and progression.

- Strengthen evaluation and research, including independent knowledge creation.