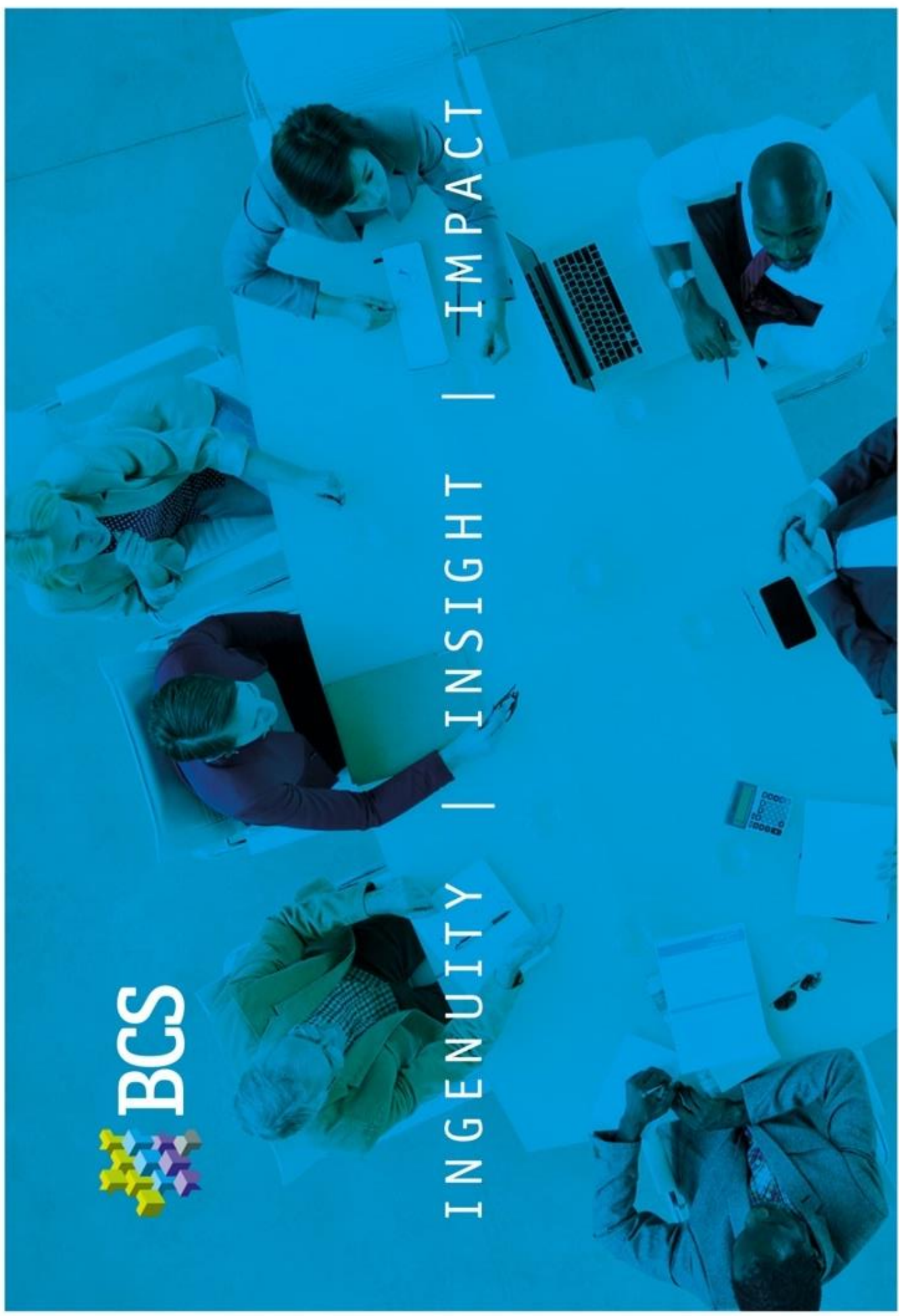


FINAL REPORT

Review of Controlled Schools' Support Council



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DOCUMENT SUMMARY

Revision History

Revision	Date	Author	Designation	Changes
0.1	May 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Initial draft
0.2	June 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Updates based on IMcK review
0.3	June 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Updates based on IMcK review
1.0	June 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	
2.0	July 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Updates based on comments from DE
3.0	August 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Updates based on further comments from DE
4.0	August 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Updates based on further comments from DE

5.0	October	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Updates based on comments from factual accuracy check by CSSC
6.0	November 2018	Mark Gilliland	Project Manager	Updates based on feedback at meeting with DE, CSSC and EA.

Approvals

Name	Designation	Date
Ian McKay	Grade 6, BCS	June 2018

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

In September 2014, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed that the “historical deficit” in controlled schools’ sectoral representation should be addressed and identified CSSC functions to address the deficit.

A provision was included within the Education Bill allowing the Department of Education (DE, the Department) to fund a controlled sector support body. As a result, the Controlled Schools’ Support Council (CSSC) was established on 1 September 2016.

There are 560 controlled schools, making up 48.4% of all schools in Northern Ireland. The diverse sector comprises nursery, primary and post primary, special, integrated and Irish-medium schools.

In August 2016, a ministerial commitment was made to review CSSC within eighteen months of its establishment.

1.2 Terms of Reference

The terms of the assignment are to:

- Analyse the effectiveness of CSSC to ensure that it is delivering on the functions agreed by the Executive;
- Assess the added value provided to the controlled schools’ sector by CSSC activities;
- Review the organisational structure of CSSC to ensure that:
 - The organisation is fit for purpose, and is properly structured to enable it to carry out its responsibilities;
 - The number of posts required and the salary scales are appropriate to the remit of the organisation;
 - The work of the organisation aligns with DE’s strategic aims, objectives and priorities as set out in its corporate plan; and
 - In relation to other public bodies, any unnecessary duplication of functions is avoided.

- In addition to the above, the Education Authority (EA) undertook a high-level review of the grading of posts required and the salary scales within the organisation.

The report covers the period to 31 March 2018.

1.3 Project Approach

The approach taken by the Review Team was as follows:

- Interviews with DE, EA, CSSC staff, CSSC Chief Executive, CSSC Chairman and board members and stakeholders within the education sector;
- Workshops with CSSC staff followed by one-to-one interviews where required to understand the nature of the work undertaken by each function of the organisation;
- Analysis of loading exercise with staff;
- Development and distribution of a survey to 560 schools within the controlled schools' sector to assess effectiveness and added value of CSSC;
- Analysis of 196 survey responses (response rate of 35%) and the development of findings and recommendations where applicable;
- Consideration of the most appropriate delivery model for CSSC to deliver its functions; and
- Development of this report, to include all findings and recommendations.

1.4 Recommendations

Based on the analysis of effectiveness, added-value and the loading exercise, the Review Team have made the following recommendations:

1. The Review Team recommends that CSSC includes comparable questions to the BCS survey to ascertain the impact of its activities on schools' understanding of CSSC and interactions with the organisation.
2. A clearly defined programme of work should be developed and agreed with DE to identify required outputs for ethos development and timeline/resource requirements for this work.
3. CSSC should develop an action plan to develop its role in identifying and encouraging potential governors to apply for specific roles and should consider more targeted promotion and publicity in this area.

4. CSSC, along with DE, should ensure that its programme of work in relation to raising educational standards aligns to and supports that of the EA. A strategic discussion should be held between CSSC, DE and EA to define CSSC's role.
5. A strategic discussion should be held between CSSC, DE and EA to define CSSC's role in representing the controlled sector within the planning of the school's estate.
6. In order to ensure CSSC resources are value-adding, CSSC should obtain feedback from schools after support has been provided.
7. CSSC should quantify the resource requirements for each activity within its programme of work and business plan, setting out how it will prioritise activities going forward.
8. CSSC's current status as a Third Party Organisation should be retained.
9. An in-depth review of CSSC's organisational structure, to include a detailed loading and grading exercise, should be undertaken no later than 2020/2021.

1.5 Acknowledgements

The authors of this report wish to express their thanks to the members of staff within CSSC, DE and external organisations consulted for their valuable contribution to the completion of this review.



2. Introduction

2.1 Background

In September 2014, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed that the “historical deficit” in controlled schools’ sectoral representation should be addressed within the Education Bill by including a provision that would allow the Department of Education (DE, the Department) to fund a controlled sector support body.

The Education Bill received Royal assent on 11th December 2014. Section 4 of the Education Act (NI) 2014 “Funding of sectoral bodies” provides for DE to “pay grants to any body which is recognised by the Department as representing the interests of controlled schools.”

The Controlled Schools’ Support Council (CSSC) was established on 1 September 2016. Its functions as agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive in September 2014 are set out within Section 3 of this report.

The Letter of Offer (LoO) which was signed by CSSC on 10 July 2017 committed the Department to undertake a review early in 2018 of the CSSC, subject to available funding. The LoO stated that the review will include an analysis of the CSSC’s effectiveness in delivering on the functions agreed by the Executive, an assessment of the added value provided to the controlled schools’ sector by its activities and a review of its organisational structure.

2.2 Terms of Reference

In December 2017, DE and BCS agreed the following Terms of Reference for the project:

The terms of the assignment are to:

- Analyse the effectiveness of CSSC to ensure that it is delivering on the functions agreed by the Executive;
- Assess the added value provided to the controlled school’s sector by CSSC activities; and
- Review the organisational structure of CSSC to ensure that:
 - The organisation is fit for purpose, and is properly structured to enable it to carry out its responsibilities;



- The number of posts required and the salary scales are appropriate to the remit of the organisation;
 - The work of the organisation aligns with DE's strategic aims, objectives and priorities as set out in its corporate plan; and
 - In relation to other public bodies, any unnecessary duplication of functions is avoided.
- In addition to the above, it was recommended by EA that it was too early in the life of CSSC to undertake a full-scale job evaluation. EA recommended that a grading exercise should be undertaken once a two year period has elapsed since it was last examined.

2.3 The Client

The client for this assignment was Beverley Wall, Director of DE Governance Directorate and the day to day contact was Liam Barr, Head of the School Governance Team.

2.4 Project Approach

The approach taken by the Review Team was as follows:

- Interviews with DE, EA, CSSC staff, CSSC Chief Executive, CSSC Chairman and board members, and stakeholders within the education sector;
- Workshops with CSSC staff followed by one-to-one interviews where required to understand the nature of the work undertaken by each function of the organisation;
- Analysis of loading exercise with staff;
- Development and distribution of a survey to 560 schools within the controlled schools' sector to assess effectiveness and added value of CSSC;
- Analysis of 196 survey responses (response rate of 35%) and the development of findings and recommendations where applicable;
- Consideration of the most appropriate delivery model for CSSC to deliver its functions; and
- Development of this report, to include all findings and recommendations.



3. Strategic Context

3.1 Background

For a number of years, it was felt by some stakeholders that the controlled schools' sector did not have sectoral support at a comparative level to other schools' sectors. The Bill to establish the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) included provisions which would have achieved parity of representation for all education sectors (controlled, maintained, Irish medium and integrated). However, due to the absence of political agreement the Bill to establish the ESA was not taken forward.

3.2 Creation of the EA

In the absence of agreement on ESA, the Executive introduced an Education Bill to replace the five Education and Library Boards and their Staff Commission with a single Education Authority. The EA did not carry the full range of functions envisaged for the ESA, nor did it include all the provisions relating to sectoral bodies.

3.3 Creation of the CSSC

The Executive agreed that the Education Bill to establish the EA should also include provision to enable the Department to fund a controlled sector support body. As such, Section 4, the Education Act (NI) 2014 states that the "Department may, subject to such conditions as it thinks fit, pay grants to any body which is recognised by the Department as representing the interests of controlled schools, or anybody which is recognised by the Department as representing grant-aided schools of any other particular description".

In order to address the long-standing deficit in representation and advocacy for the controlled schools' sector the body would be able to in delivering functions as set out by the Minister provide support, among other things, in the following areas:



- to work with the EA to support the development of school based staff and governors to ensure they can perform their roles effectively.
- to explore with schools and stakeholders developmental issues around area planning, shared education and school improvement.
- to ensure the Controlled Sector is promoted and where appropriate the CSSC acts as its advocate.

The DE 2015/16 Business Plan included a specific objective “to provide funding to the Controlled Schools’ Support Council to deliver the functions agreed by the Executive on 9 September 2014 by December 2015”. On 24 September 2015 the then Minister agreed that CSSC would require funding of approximately £1million p.a. to deliver its functions. The CSSC was formally established on 1 September 2016 with grant funding of up to approximately £1,000,000, proportioned to £879,383 p.a. for remaining seven months for an agreed programme of work. Its functions are to:

- Provide a representational and advocacy role for controlled schools, including advice and support in responding to consultation exercises in respect of education policies, initiatives and schemes, and in regard to relationships with the Department, the Education Authority and other Departments;
- Work with schools within the sector to develop and maintain the collective ethos of the sector including, where appropriate, a role in identifying, encouraging and nominating governors and in ensuring ethos is part of employment considerations;
- Work with the Education Authority to raise educational standards;
- Participate in the planning of the schools’ estate, assessing current and ongoing provision within the sector, participating in area-based planning co-ordinated by DE and the Education Authority (including membership of the Department’s Area Planning Steering Group), and engaging where appropriate in strategic planning processes, including community planning; and
- Build co-operation and engage with other sectors in matters of mutual interest, including promotion of tolerance and understanding.

3.3.1 CSSC Organisational Status and Structure



CSSC was created as a Third Sector Organisation and receives annual grant funding to perform the functions set out above. In August 2017, HMT recommended that CSSC be classified as a non-profit institution and as part of the private sector. While the potential exists for this to be reviewed by ONS, DoF have advised that this is unlikely. The organisation structure of CSSC is set out in Section 6 of this report. The organisation is structured across three directorates:

- Corporate Services;
- Education Support; and
- Marketing, Research & Communications.

These three functions are supported by a clerical team.



4. Effectiveness – Findings, Analysis and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

As per the Terms of Reference for the assignment, this section analyses the effectiveness of CSSC to ensure that it is delivering on the functions agreed by the Executive. These functions are set out in Section 3 and summarised as follows:

- Provide a representational and advocacy role for controlled schools;
- Work with schools within the sector to develop and maintain the collective ethos of the sector;
- Work with the EA to raise educational standards;
- Participate in the planning of the schools' estate; and
- Build co-operation and engage with other sectors in matters of mutual interest.

This section of the report will assess each of the above functions in turn. The analysis will draw from a range of sources:

- Survey with controlled schools (members / non-members) around the above functions;
- Discussions with stakeholders;
- Discussions with CSSC Chief Executive, Chair, Directors and staff;
- Discussions with DE staff;
- CSSC progress reporting and documentation; and
- Analysis by the BCS team.

Surveys were issued to all 560 controlled schools, which make up 48.4% of all schools in Northern Ireland. A total of 196 surveys were received (an above average response rate of 35%). Of these 196 surveys, 94% (185 schools) had registered with CSSC. Only these respondents were asked about their experiences with CSSC and the analysis in the following sections relate solely to this group. A summary of responses of non-members is provided in Section 4.8.



Throughout the survey, it should be noted that a substantial number of respondents answered “Neither Effective nor Ineffective” for many functions. There was a substantial number of schools who had provided a neutral response against all questions (21 schools in total, 11% of respondents), with an increasing number of schools having experience of only one or two functions (36% of schools provided a neutral response to all but two questions). For the most part, this response indicates limited experience of engagement with CSSC at this early stage of the organisation. However, it may also indicate a potential issue that certain schools are not engaging with CSSC or do not have the opportunity to do so. While there is no recommendation in relation to this point, it would be of value for CSSC to look at alternative methods of engaging with these potentially “hard-to-reach” schools.

Where the Review Team felt a neutral response was of note, it has been addressed in the appropriate section.

4.2 Representational and advocacy role

CSSC’s representational and advocacy activities to date have included:

- Attending local area planning meetings, consulting with schools and advocating on their behalf in relation to area planning;
- An analysis of the controlled schools’ sector that highlighted the size and diversity of the sector;
- Consultation around proposed changes to minibuss licencing;
- Consultation with schools around the impact of a reduction in education funding;
- An analysis of attainment of performance within the schools’ sector, highlighting areas of underachievement within the sector; and
- Responding to consultations on proposals for change in area planning.

4.2.1 Views of schools

Of the 165 schools which responded when asked how effective CSSC has been in providing a representational and advocacy role for the controlled schools’ sector (84% of respondents), the following breakdown of the respondents is set out below.

Providing a representational and advocacy role for the Controlled Schools' sector

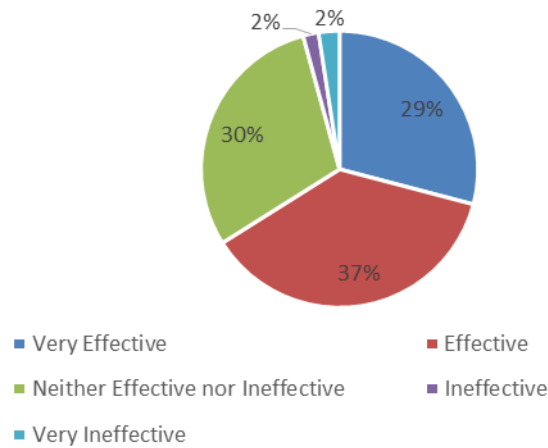


Figure 4.2.1: Rating the effectiveness of CSSC representational and advocacy role

The quantitative research identified that two-thirds (66%) of schools indicated that CSSC has been effective or very effective in its representational and advocacy function. Conversely, only 4% suggested that CSSC had been ineffective in this role. Among those who considered CSSC’s work in this area as effective, a number of schools stated that the sector is now represented more effectively than previously.

“CSSC has been very proactive in representing the Controlled Sector with EA, DE and other statutory agencies. In addition, they have represented the Controlled Sector with other key stake holders across Northern Ireland. This is the first time we as a school believe that the Controlled Sector has been appropriately represented.”

While CSSC is still a relatively young organisation, it is noteworthy at this point that 30% responded “Neither Effective nor Ineffective”. From these schools, qualitative responses suggested that there was no evidence of the CSSC’s advocacy and representational work, or that it has had limited impact to date. Some schools stated that they were too busy to deal with CSSC or to read its newsletters, while two schools specifically mentioned that they were unable to attend meetings or events due to time or geographical constraints. These responses suggest that, while CSSC is actively engaged with schools, it may need to look at how it can access



schools more effectively. This is particularly important within its representational role as CSSC must ensure it represents the views of the sector as a whole.

4.2.2 Views of Stakeholders

Stakeholder consultation supported the view that CSSC has been effective in the initial stages of its advocacy and representational role. While it was acknowledged that it is difficult to judge the impact of the role at this stage, there is a sense that CSSC is particularly strong in this area, with proactive research and marketing, along with an ability to respond to consultations quickly and effectively.

4.2.3 Analysis

There is a general view that CSSC's representational and advocacy role is important to the controlled schools' sector. CSSC should be conscious of a substantial number of schools with limited experience of CSSC's impact and work to develop its reach to schools in developing this function.

Recommendation 1: The Review Team recommends that CSSC includes comparable questions to the BCS survey to ascertain the impact of its activities on schools' understanding of CSSC and interactions with the organisation.

4.3 Develop and maintain collective ethos

As shown in Figure 4.3, the majority of schools considered CSSC to be effective or very effective in the development and maintenance of a collective ethos (64% of all respondents), with 6% considering the work ineffective. 30% responded "neither effective nor ineffective", with the majority of these respondents having limited involvement with CSSC in this area.

Working with schools to develop and maintain the collective ethos of the sector

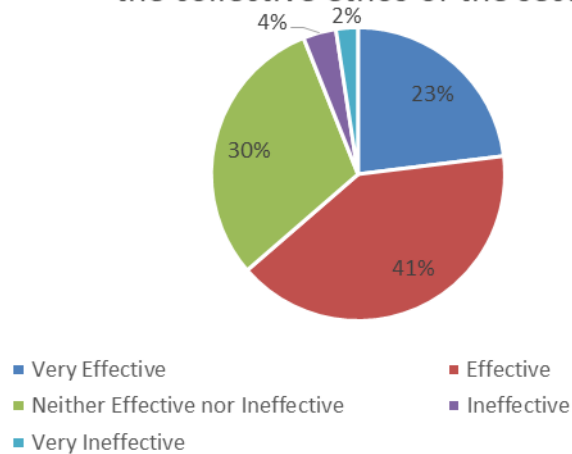


Figure 4.3 Rating the effectiveness of developing and maintaining a collective ethos

Across schools and through wider stakeholder consultation, there was a strong consensus that the consideration of collective ethos for controlled schools was an area that has been neglected within the controlled schools’ sector for a number of years, with CSSC having an integral role in addressing this gap. A number of school principals acknowledged that day-to-day business tended to get in the way of considering how to enhance / develop collective ethos and this was an area where CSSC involvement was valued.

“For the first time, in my memory as a Principal of almost 25 years’ experience, people are actively seeking to understand what the controlled sector means by ‘ethos’, and to work towards an agreed statement. This is vital for the sector.”

Stakeholders broadly agreed with the consensus of schools. While they acknowledged the subject is nebulous to an extent, significant work has been made in creating a ‘baseline’ and consultation with schools, churches and community groups to gather as much input into the subject as possible. However, there was some concern that no tangible output had been produced in relation to this work (as at March 2018).

The response from schools identifies a clear role for CSSC in the development of a collective ethos. While there has been no tangible output to date, there is an opportunity for CSSC to set out a clear approach and outputs for ethos development.

Recommendation 2: **The Review Team recommends a clearly defined programme of work should be developed and agreed with DE to identify required outputs for ethos development and timeline / resource requirements for this work.**

4.3.1 Identifying, encouraging and nominating governors

Within this function, CSSC has a role in working with schools within the sector to develop and maintain its collective ethos, including, where appropriate, a role in identifying, encouraging and nominating governors and ensuring that ethos is part of employment considerations. The majority of schools responded “neither effective nor ineffective” or that no support has been sought to date (the majority of schools have not gone through a reconstitution process during the period). The majority of qualitative responses from these schools stated that they had no experience of this work yet.

Working to identify and encourage applications from potential governors on behalf of your school

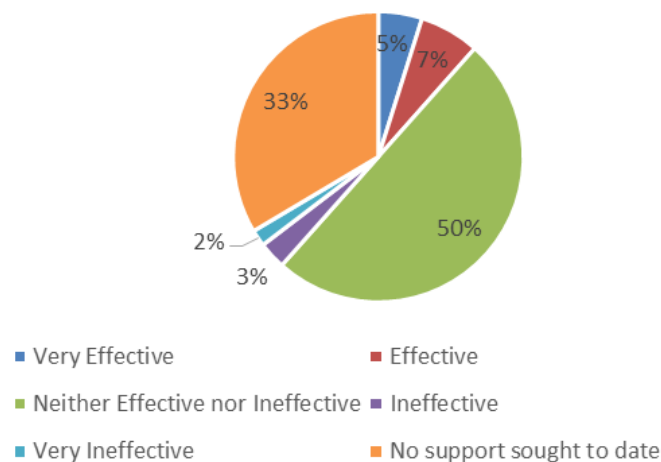


Figure 4.3.1 Rating the effectiveness of identifying and encouraging applications from potential governors

Stakeholder consultation suggests that there was an expectation that CSSC would be more proactive in the promotion and publicity in relation to encouraging potential governors to apply. Some schools stated in their qualitative responses that they were unaware of CSSC’s role in this area, suggesting limited promotion has taken place.



It is clear that CSSC has had a strong presence within the selection process for governors and currently sit on the EA's panel to consider submitted applications. Although there is a role for CSSC in this area (in particular ensuring the importance of ethos is considered when appointing governors), this appears to have taken precedence over identifying and encouraging applications for potential governors. There is currently limited evidence to suggest that new applications from potential governors have been received as a result of CSSC promotion or encouragement, which is the core responsibility of the organisation within this function. It is the view of the Review Team that an increased focus on identifying and encouraging governors to apply would be of greater value to the governor application / selection process and would be additional to a function already supplied by the EA.

Recommendation 3: CSSC should develop an action plan to develop its role in identifying and encouraging potential governors to apply for specific roles in schools and should consider more targeted promotion and publicity in this area.

4.4 Working with the EA to raise educational standards

4.4.1 Views of Schools

Schools were asked how effective CSSC has been in working with the EA to support the sector in raising educational standards. A breakdown of the respondents is set out in Figure 4.4.1.

Working with the Education Authority to support the sector in raising educational standards

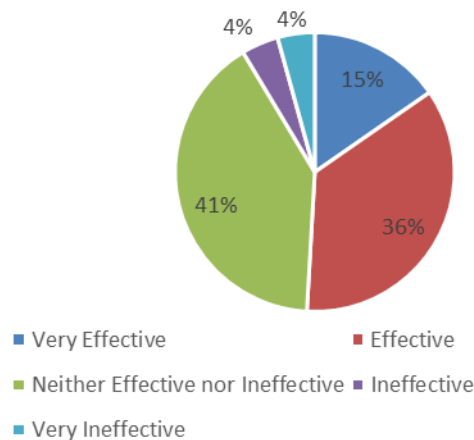


Figure 4.4.1 Rating the effectiveness of working with the EA to raise educational standards



The responses demonstrate that around half (51%) of schools indicated that CSSC has been effective or very effective in this function. 8% suggested that CSSC had been ineffective in this role.

A substantial proportion of schools responded “neither effective nor ineffective” (41%). Qualitative responses from these schools suggest that it is too early to ascertain the impact of any work CSSC has undertaken.

“I think that this work is ongoing with the CSSC and it will take considerably more time for the impact of the CSSC to be assessed.”

4.4.2 Views of Stakeholders

Some stakeholders within the education sector expressed concerns about the clarity of CSSC’s role within this area and how this work interacts with EA’s statutory responsibility. The following concerns are summarised below:

- It was acknowledged that school improvement services have been wound down since the dissolution of the former Education and Library Boards. With limited resources, EA has become more reactive towards school improvement (usually after school inspections). As such, there is a gap in proactive school improvement. There is a risk that, while well-intended, CSSC officers might fill this role informally when asked by schools for support.
- Currently EA and CSSC have separate business plans in raising educational standards, with limited interaction in the development of these plans. There is therefore a concern that CSSC’s activities overlap with those of EA.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between EA and CSSC to agree ways of working together and provide a delineation of responsibility. While aware of the MoU, stakeholders felt it is too early to determine whether this will mitigate the concerns raised and provide clarity to CSSC’s role in this area. However, it is the opinion of the Review Team that there should be greater alignment between the work of EA and CSSC in relation to raising educational standards. It is not yet clear what a partnership with EA in this area would entail.



CSSC’s programme of work should be developed with a view to ensuring its activities are additional to those of EA and support in the delivery of EA’s statutory responsibilities. It may be of benefit to hold a strategic discussion between CSSC, DE and EA with a view to clearly defining CSSC’s role.

Recommendation 4: CSSC, along with DE, should ensure that its programme of work in relation to raising educational standards aligns to and supports that of the EA. A strategic discussion should be held between CSSC, DE and EA to define CSSC’s role.

4.5 Participating in the planning of the schools’ estate

4.5.1 Views of Schools

Figure 4.5.1 sets out schools’ assessment of CSSC’s effectiveness in its participation in planning of the schools’ estate. As would be expected, the majority of schools responded “neither effective nor ineffective” or that they have not yet sought support from CSSC (67%).

Participating in the planning of your school's estate

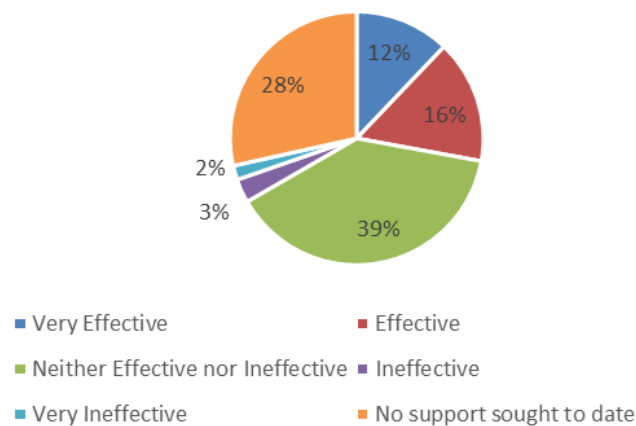


Figure 4.5.1 Rating CSSC’s effectiveness in participating in the planning of the schools’ estate



28% of respondents considered the support received to be effective, while only 5% considered it ineffective. Some positive qualitative feedback included:

"I was pleased by the response of CSSC towards our forthcoming amalgamation where they contacted DE with their support for our development proposal following consultation with us."

"CSSC support officers have been an excellent and very welcome support for the School in developing an appropriate area based planning solution for our individual school and also representing the School's interests on area based planning groups."

4.5.2 Views of Stakeholders

Consultation with stakeholders suggests that CSSC has a strong presence in this area, with CSSC representation on the Area Planning Strategic Group, Area Planning Working Group and three Area Planning Local Groups. It was acknowledged that defining the true impact of this work is difficult so early in the process and in an area with so many organisations involved.

However, some initial concerns raised by stakeholders included:

- As is the case with raising educational standards, concerns were raised by stakeholders about the additionality of CSSC's activities to those of the EA (CSSC sit on same working groups that currently have EA representation.)
- There is possible tension between CSSC's focus on supporting controlled schools and its focus on the most appropriate solution for the schools' sector as a whole. CSSC's exact role in this area is not stated explicitly in the description of its functions. However, some stakeholders stated that they had expected CSSC to hold "difficult conversations" with schools in a critical friend role where necessary. This was seen as an area where CSSC could add value to the process, however there is little evidence of this occurring.

4.5.3 Views of CSSC

CSSC has placed a significant emphasis on its role within the schools' estate planning process and has representation at strategic and operational levels. Echoing the views of schools with experience of CSSC in this area, the organisation feels it has added value to the process by



representing the controlled sector. When necessary, CSSC believes it has advised on the most suitable solution of the educational sector as a whole, without a singular focus on the controlled sector.

CSSC highlighted the time burden of the estate planning process, particularly on its School Support Officers, with significant time spent on attendance of meetings, response to consultations and development proposals. The loading exercise suggested a substantial proportion of time was spent on estate planning activities, with around 20% of Schools Support Officers time and 42% of a senior member of staff's time spent on these activities. CSSC voiced concerns that this is an area that is likely to increase even further and the pressure this will place on staff going forward.

4.5.4 Analysis

As is the case with raising educational standards, the exact role of the CSSC is not entirely clear. Further guidance is required to determine whether CSSC's role in this area is an advocacy role on behalf of controlled schools, or a more participative role in the wider process of planning the schools' estate as a whole.

Schools' estate planning is a demand that is likely to increase further over the next few years. It is likely that CSSC's involvement in its current guise and with current resources will need to be refocused with this potential increase in demand. As such, CSSC must focus its resources on the areas most likely to add value to the process. In order to ensure this is the case, it is the opinion of the Review Team that this role should be considered within the strategic discussion set out in Section 4.4.

Recommendation 5: A strategic discussion should be held between CSSC, DE and EA to define CSSC's role in representing the controlled sector within the planning of the schools' estate.

4.6 Build co-operation and engage with other sectors

53% of schools felt that CSSC has been effective in building cooperation with other school sectors. Only 6% stated that it was ineffective, with the remainder responding "neither effective nor ineffective".

Building cooperation and engaging with other school sectors

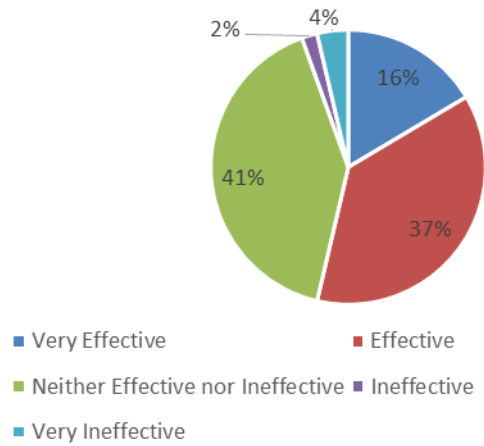


Figure 4.6 Rating CSSC's effectiveness in engaging with other school sectors

"Effective and meaningful connections and engagements are taking place, especially with Maintained sector. The fact that those from other sectors want to be a part of CSSC speaks volumes in itself for the work being done."

The views from both schools and other representative bodies suggest that CSSC has been proactive in relation to cooperation and engagement with other school sectors, most notably CCMS and NICIE, both through sharing of best practice and in discussions around the development of ethos.

4.7 CSSC Ways of Working

In addition to assessing CSSC’s specific functions, respondents were asked to assess a number of subjects relating to CSSC’s general ways of working. The responses are set out below:

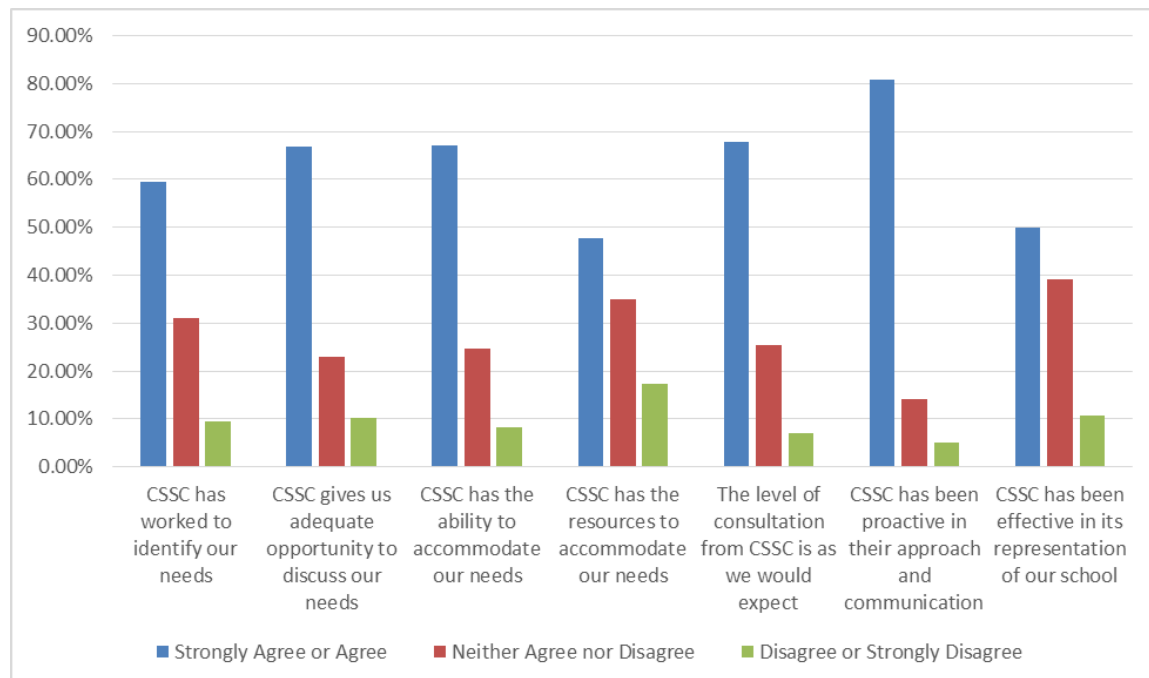


Figure 4.7(a) Assessing CSSC’s ways of working

The responses suggest that schools are broadly satisfied with CSSC’s support during its first full year. Specifically, respondents were positive towards CSSC’s proactivity in its approach and communication (81% of respondents), the level of consultation (68%) and its ability to accommodate their needs (67%).

Conversely, only 48% of respondents felt that CSSC had the necessary resources to accommodate their needs, while 50% believe that CSSC has been effective in its representation of their school. A substantial proportion of schools responded “Neither Agree nor Disagree”, for these questions, suggesting limited interaction with CSSC at this stage. Similarly, when asked if they were satisfied with the support provided by their CSSC School Support Officer, a substantial proportion of respondents stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (42%). Again, this suggests limited interaction with CSSC. Of the schools who gave a definitive response, satisfaction levels were high (93% of respondents were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’.)

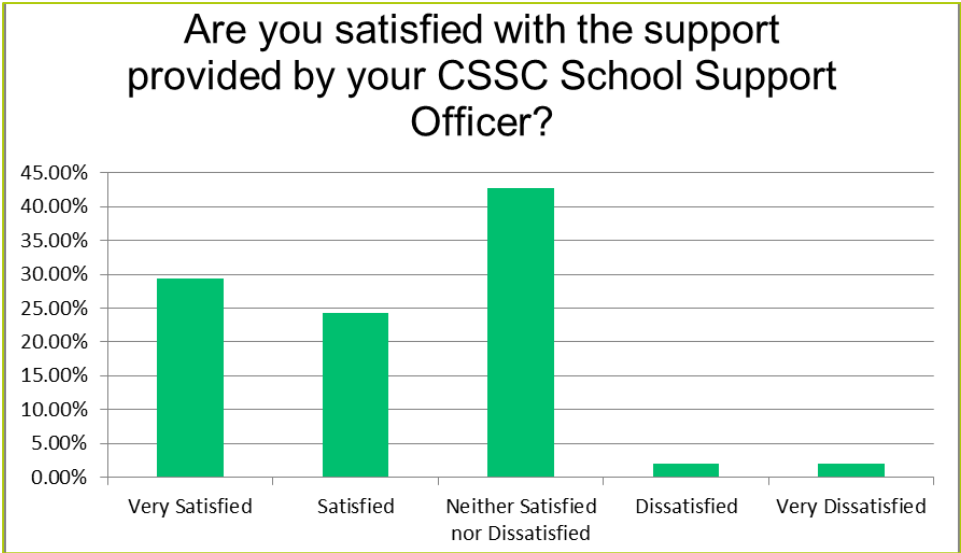


Figure 4.7(b) Level of satisfaction with CSSC School Support Officer

4.8 Non-Member Schools

Schools who had not yet signed up to CSSC were included within the survey group, however were not asked to answer questions relating to the effectiveness of its functions. Instead, these respondents were asked about the reason they did not join and whether they would consider signing up in the future. Only 11 schools who had not registered with CSSC responded to the survey. As such, the results below should be used for indication only.

When asked about the reason for not registering with CSSC, 36% of respondents did not see a reason to sign up.

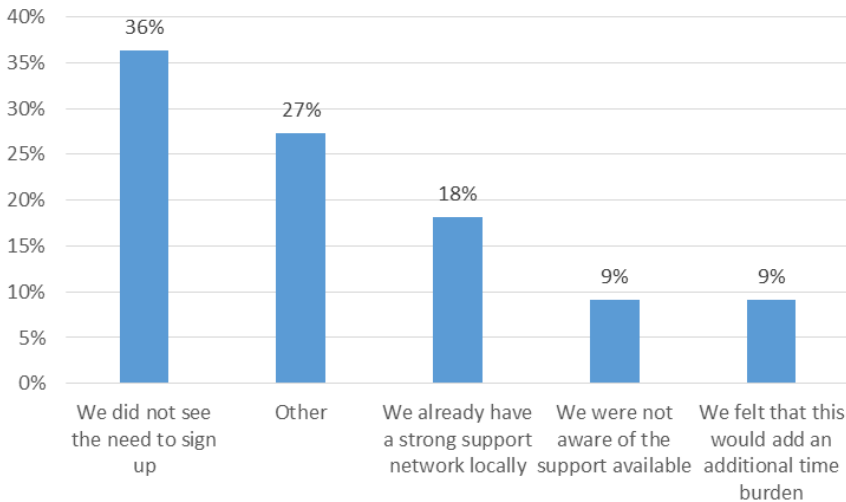


Figure 4.8(a) Reason for not registering with CSSC

When asked about the reason for not registering with CSSC, 36% of respondents did not see a reason to sign up.

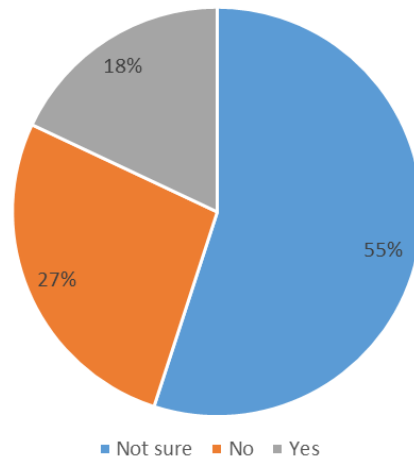


Figure 4.8(b) Would you consider signing up for CSSC support in the future?

4.9 Section Summary

This section has considered the effectiveness of CSSC in delivering on the functions agreed by the Executive. While it is difficult to ascertain the outcomes generated from CSSC intervention at this point, it is apparent that CSSC has been of benefit to the controlled schools' sector, most notably in relation to its role as an advocate and representative of the sector and to providing a voice to controlled schools in relation to estate planning.

However, it is clear that CSSC is a new organisation still looking to develop relationships, processes and ways of working. Stakeholder consultation suggests that significant work must be done to ensure these relationships and ways of working allow for CSSC's work to complement and add value to that of the wider educational sector. Most notably, CSSC must agree and define its role within improving educational standards and area planning to ensure its work supports and complements that of the EA. It is suggested that a strategic discussion should be held between CSSC, DE and EA to accomplish this.

The following section will set out the added value of CSSC activities.

5. Added value provided to the controlled schools' sector

5.1 Introduction

As per the terms of reference, this section assesses the added value provided to the controlled schools' sector by CSSC activities. As part of this assessment, the Review Team has undertaken the following process:

- An assessment of the additionality of CSSC support / intervention to schools; and
- Gathering opinions of schools in relation to the impact of CSSC activities.

It should be noted that, while the opinions gathered during the exercise are indicative of CSSC's value to the sector, it is the opinion of the Review Team that it is too early in the organisation's life to make any quantifiable assertions around the impact / added value to the controlled sector.

5.2 Additionality of CSSC support

In order to assess the added value of CSSC, schools were asked to consider the extent to which issues would have been addressed without CSSC support. A total of 77 responses were provided for individual issues where schools received support from CSSC.¹

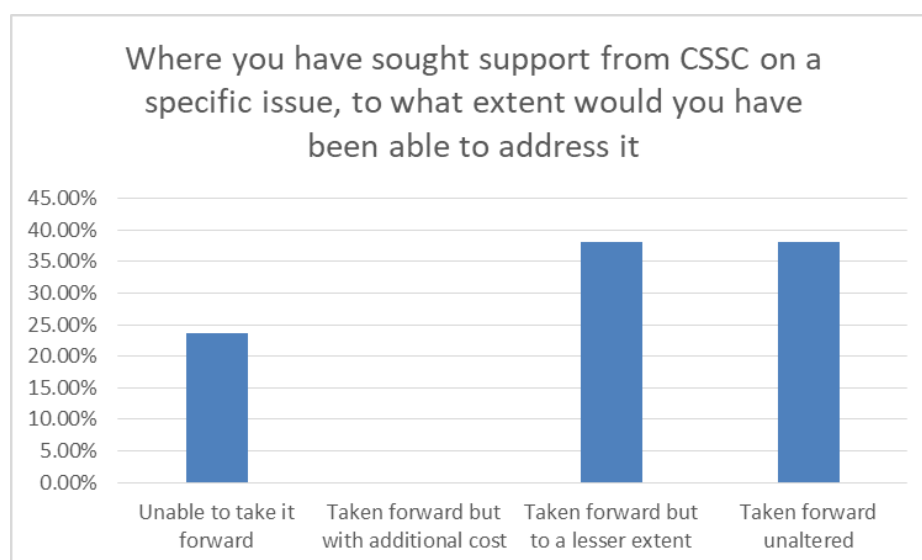


Figure 5.2 The extent to which schools would have been able to address issues without CSSC support

¹ Respondents were asked to consider up to two issues: 62 responses were provided for one issue with a further 15 schools responding for a second issue.

From the responses, 23% felt that they would have been unable to address the issue without this support. Around 39% believed they would have addressed the issue, but to a lesser extent. Of those who would not have been able to take the issue forward unaltered, the most common issues were accommodation / area planning issues and budget / funding issues.

A substantial proportion of respondents stated that they would have taken the issue forward unaltered (38%). Among these responses, no one type of issue is prevalent. However, consideration should be given to undertaking a wider review of support to schools to ascertain which activities are of value to schools. As will be discussed in the following section, CSSC should focus its finite resource and effort on value-adding activities.

Recommendation 6: In order to ensure CSSC resources are value-adding, CSSC should obtain feedback from schools after support has been provided.

5.3 Representing and advocating on behalf the controlled sector

Echoing the opinions of schools in the previous section, schools were broadly of the view that CSSC has been effective in identifying and representing the needs of the controlled schools' sector as a whole.

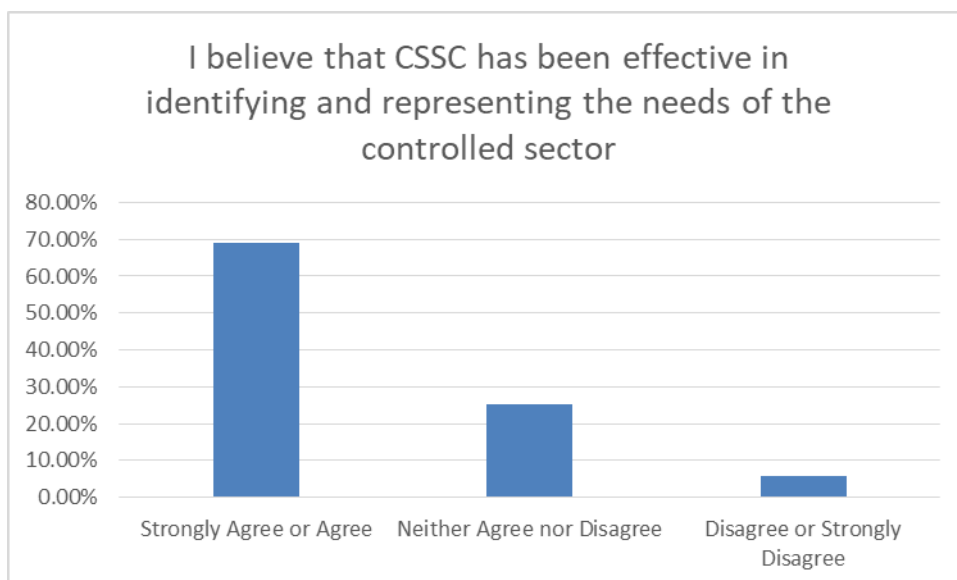


Figure 5.3(a) Rating the effectiveness of CSSC identifying and representing the needs of the controlled sector

Similarly, responses were positive towards CSSC’s advocacy role within the controlled schools’ sector, with 79% of respondents agreeing that CSSC plays an important role in this area.

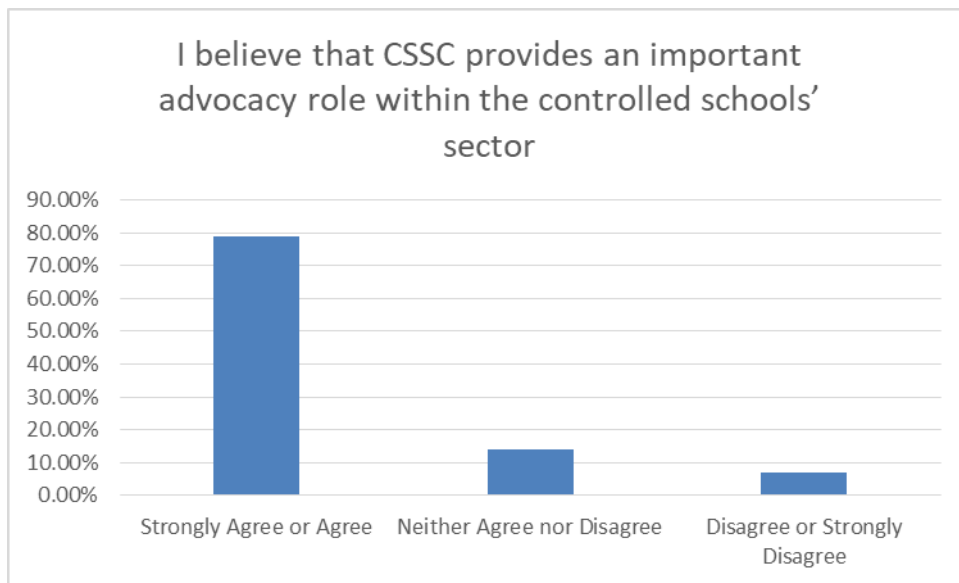


Figure 5.3(b) Rating CSSC’s advocacy role on behalf of the controlled schools’ sector

A recurring theme among qualitative responses throughout the survey was a belief that the representative and advocacy of CSSC is an important role for the sector. For the most part, those who have had involvement or experience of CSSC’s were positive towards CSSC’s impact in this area.

“CSSC has been very proactive in representing the Controlled Sector with EA, DE and other statutory agencies. In addition, they have represented the Controlled Sector with other key stakeholders across Northern Ireland. This is the first time we as a school believe that the Controlled Sector has been appropriately represented.”

Respondents from the controlled nursery sector were particularly clear in their appreciation of the value added by CSSC. Due to the nature of nursery school teaching (where the majority of school principals have a teaching role), a number of schools felt that CSSC input had been important in developing a network of peers and expedited their ability to bring together their views.

“Controlled schools are being represented and their voices heard. The sector’s views and needs are being clearly articulated to EA, the Department of Education and other bodies, and are kept at the forefront of discussions. They are not forgotten about.”

5.4 Section Summary

This section has considered the added value provided to the controlled schools' sector by CSSC. In line with the assessment of effectiveness in the previous section, the controlled schools' sector appreciates the support and input from CSSC in relation to its representative and advocacy role. While it is too early to accurately measure any added value to the sector as a whole, there is a clear indication from the sector that this is a role that has been missing from the sector and that CSSC have made a positive start in fulfilling this role.

In relation to specific support to schools, it is slightly concerning to see such a high proportion of respondents who could take the issue forward unaltered. While it is not possible to determine the exact nature of support from responses and the time and resource involved from CSSC, the organisation should look to ensure it focuses on value-adding activities. This should be considered within the strategic discussion described in Section 4.

6. Organisational Structure

6.1 Introduction

This section reviews CSSC's organisational structure to ensure its suitability in delivering its agreed functions. The CSSC is currently structured as follows:

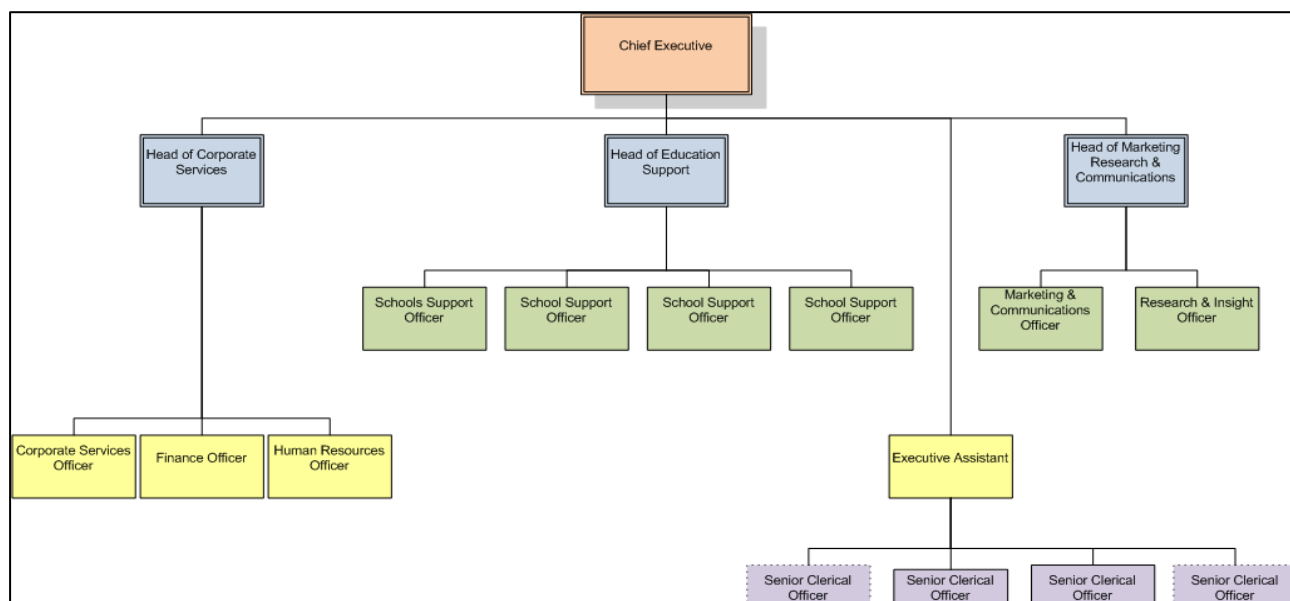


Figure 6.1 CSSC's organisational structure

Specifically, this section assesses:

- If the number of posts required and the salary scales are appropriate to the remit of the organisation;
- The alignment with DE's strategic aims, objectives and priorities as set out in its corporate plan; and
- In relation to public bodies, whether any unnecessary duplication of functions is avoided.

6.2 Number of posts

An exercise was undertaken by the Review Team to provide an indication on loading after around 18 months of the set up of CSSC. The assessment was across each function within CSSC: Corporate Services; Education Support; Marketing, Research & Communications; Executive Assistant & Clerical Support. With the exception of the Chief Executive, all posts were assessed (17 posts in total).

The process for the loading exercise was as follows:

- Workshops held with each team to get an initial understanding of the work staff were undertaking and to capture activities that sit outside of job descriptions (e.g. meetings, liaison with external organisations). Staff attended these meetings according to their organisational structure with line management attending;
- Staff were given loading sheets to complete, with all activities from workshops and job descriptions included. Staff were asked to complete these sheets to include timings and frequencies with BCS support (where not previously discussed in workshops;) and
- BCS undertook a number of follow up meetings and emails to discuss and challenge outputs from the loading exercise.

6.2.1 Findings

Based on discussions with staff, there was a clear indication that the majority of staff indicated a level of overload, with many staff commenting that they regularly take work home at evenings and weekends. However, despite considerable challenge from the Review Team, the information provided to the Review Team suggests a level of overloading that is unrealistic. As such, the Review Team is not in a position to comment on the level of loading within CSSC with assurance in the accuracy of the exercise.

It was apparent from face-to-face discussions with staff that everyone is busy and feels under significant pressure in managing their workload. The Review Team made the following observations during the exercise:

- It was apparent from discussions with staff that CSSC is still a relatively young organisation and is in the process of developing relationships with external organisations, creating policies (in particular HR) and creating processes in managing and allocating work. Based on the discussions, these tasks are creating additional time and effort for staff while the organisation embeds. While the loading exercise should not account for these “peaks”, staff were unable to determine which of these activities would be ongoing.
- There is limited evidence of effective prioritisation of work or resource planning. Currently there is a sense within CSSC staff that they are under pressure in reacting to work demands. Neither CSSC’s Programme of Work nor its business plan sets out the resource requirements for planned

activities throughout the year. Linked to the previous section, CSSC should prioritise those activities which are most value-adding within its resource constraint. Without effective workload allocation processes, it is not clear how CSSC can quantify this resource constraint.

- Linked to the point above, there is a sense that CSSC is stretched too thinly across a range of activities. With a focus on such a wide range of activities, there is a risk that CSSC is unable to carry out its core functions within budget. The strategic discussion described in Section 4 should assist the CSSC in focusing its resources and efforts on ensuring a greater focus on complementary and value adding activities.

Recommendation 7: CSSC should quantify the resource requirements for each activity within its Programme of Work and business plan, setting out how it will prioritise activities going forward.

6.3 Grading of posts

A summary of the considerations of EA as part of the grading exercise is attached in Appendix 1.

6.4 Duplication of functions with other public bodies

While the functions of CSSC are set out by the NI Executive, the way in which the organisation performs these functions is not specified. Based on the description of CSSC's functions, it is therefore not apparent if it overlaps with any other public bodies. There is, however, a risk that certain activities performed by CSSC may overlap with the statutory responsibilities of EA. As set out in Section 4 of this report, consultations suggest the following initial concerns:

- Working with the EA to raise educational standards – currently EA and CSSC have separate business plans in raising educational standards, with limited interaction in the development of these plans. There is therefore a concern that CSSC's activities overlap with those of EA.
- Identifying, encouraging and nominating governors – as stated in Section 4, it is not clear if CSSC's current role in the process is additional to that of EA's. The role of CSSC within this process should be clarified to ensure no duplication with EA.

6.5 Section Summary

This section has considered the CSSC organisational structure. It is evident from the exercise that CSSC is still in the process of bedding in its processes, policies and external relationships. As such, it is too early to comment definitively on the number of staff required. However, there are concerns about CSSC's current resource management and ability to prioritise work to maximise the value added from its finite resource. This view is echoed within the grading exercise undertaken by EA, where it has been deemed too early to review posts.

As highlighted in previous sections, there is some indication at this early stage that some of CSSC's activities risk overlapping with those of the EA.

The following section considers the most appropriate delivery model for CSSC.

7. Consideration of alternative delivery models

7.1 Introduction

This section of the report considers findings from previous sections and analyses various potential delivery models. The Review Team considered the following relevant delivery models:

1. Abolish;
2. Commercial model;
3. Bring in-house;
4. Merge with another body;
5. Delivery by a new executive agency;
6. Delivery by an NDPB; and
7. Continued delivery as a Third Sector Organisation.

7.2 Analysis of the Alternative Delivery Models

This section sets out the Review Team's analysis of each of the alternative delivery models. It is important to note that the following is not designed as a complete list of all the analysis of each model. Rather, the intention is to provide a summary of the most pertinent aspects of the analysis of the Review Team.

7.2.1 Abolish

While the consideration of need was precluded from the Terms of Reference, the Strategic Context sets out a clear need for a representative body such as CSSC. As such, it is the view of the Review Team that abolition of CSSC is not a viable option.

7.2.2 Commercial Model

It is the view of the Review Team that outsourcing CSSC functions would raise questions around the ability of the organisation to act with complete independence and objectivity.

7.2.3 Bring In-House

It is the view of the Review Team that bringing the functions in-house, to be delivered by DE personnel would significantly impinge on CSSC's independence. CSSC's ability to advocate on behalf of controlled schools and provide critical challenge to the Department when necessary would be stifled by competing Departmental pressures and agendas.

The Review Team also consider that another potential drawback of this option may be around the generalist nature of civil servant roles. This includes development and progression moves that lead to recurrent rotating of staff into other generalist roles. This may restrict the build-up of sufficient technical knowledge of staff.

Finally, it would be anticipated that the confidence and level of trust built within the Sector could be lost through bringing CSSC in-house.

7.2.4 Merge with another Body

Throughout the project the Review Team did not identify suitable options for merger. While there may be potential for greater alignment with EA, the Review Team does not go as far as a merger. CSSC's distance from government and separation from EA was cited by stakeholders as a benefit to CSSC. Stakeholders believed that CSSC was in a stronger position to provide critical challenge to the EA and advocate for the controlled schools' sector more openly due to its segregation from EA.

As set out in Section 3, there are potential issues around overlap between the two organisations and could benefit from a strategic discussion on CSSC's role within improving educational standards and planning of the schools' estate.

7.2.5 Delivery by a New Executive Agency

With strong similarity to the points raised previously on bringing functions in-house, this is not regarded as a viable option. The Review Team regard that a step towards central government, as represented by agency status, would impact on the perception of CSSC in terms of its independence and challenge function. Further, the creation of a new agency to deliver the functions would not offer any discernible value for money.

7.2.6 Delivery by an NDPB

With ministerial accountability for the performance of the organisation, it is the opinion of the Review Team that an NDPB would limit CSSC's ability to fulfil its function of independent advocacy for the controlled schools' sector.

As is the case with bringing services in-house, the Review Team regard that a step towards central government, as represented by NDPB status, would impact on the perception of CSSC in terms of its independence and challenge function. Further, the creation of a new NDPB to deliver the functions would not offer any discernible value for money.

7.2.7 Continued delivery as a Third Sector Organisation

In determining whether CSSC should continue as a Third Sector Organisation, the Review Team have assessed whether any significant changes have been implemented since the organisation's establishment in September 2016. The Review Team have made the following assertions:

- There have been no changes to the core functions of the CSSC since its creation;
- The CSSC is not a statutory organisation under the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014;
- Since September 2016, CSSC has not been tasked with delivering any statutory responsibilities;
- There have been no significant changes to the landscape of the education sector that would impact on CSSC's ability to perform its duties or to place greater responsibility on CSSC; and

- There has been no significant changes in legislation that would impact on the requirements of the CSSC.

In August 2017, HMT recommended that CSSC be classified as a third sector organisation and as part of the private sector. Re-classification of CSSC is outside the control of DE and while the potential exists for this to be reviewed by ONS, DoF has advised that this is unlikely. It is also likely that a change in classification would require ministerial approval.

Taking into account the above, it is the opinion of the Review Team that there is no evidence to suggest that CSSC should move from a Third Sector Organisation at this time.

Recommendation 8: CSSC's current status as a Third Party Organisation should be retained.

8. Conclusion

The Education Act (NI) 2014 made provision for the Department to fund a body to represent the views of the controlled schools' sector. Consequently, CSSC was established in September 2016 with the role of supporting and representing the controlled schools' sector in Northern Ireland. The organisation was created with a view to addressing a historical gap in the support available to the controlled schools' sector.

As the CSSC is a relatively young organisation, it is still developing its roles, processes and relationships within the education sector. However, early indications suggest that CSSC has been proactive in its advocacy and representational role. School feedback suggests that this is a valued role within the sector and addresses a significant historical gap.

The demand for services is likely to increase in the future, most notably around schools' estate planning, as well as advocacy and representation on funding and budgetary constraints. This highlights the relevance of an organisation like CSSC and the importance of the support to the controlled schools' sector. At the same time, the review indicates that staff currently have relatively busy workloads, which will likely increase if current practice continues.

Given the importance of a representational body to the controlled schools' sector, it is important to ensure optimal use of this important resource. This loading exercise has highlighted that there are potential issues in relation to focussing on value-adding activities, planning resources effectively and managing stakeholder expectations. At the same time, CSSC's activities must be supportive of the EA's statutory functions and additional to its services. As such, the report suggests a strategic discussion between CSSC, DE and EA to ensure alignment of activities and clarity of CSSC's functions and avoid potential duplication of services.

This report did not identify any significant changes in CSSC's functions or in the educational landscape to suggest a change in its current delivery model as a Third Sector organisation.

Taking on board all of the information gathered as part of this review, it is the opinion of the Review Team that, while too early to assess CSSC's impact quantifiably, the organisation has made a positive and proactive start in engaging with and representing the controlled schools' sector. As the organisation is still in the process of developing its processes, structures and relationship, the Review Team suggests that this report should be viewed as an interim review, with a more in-depth review of organisational structure, grading and loading of posts to be undertaken no later than 2020/21.

Recommendation 9: An in-depth review of CSSC's organisational structure, to include a detailed loading and grading exercise, should be undertaken no later than 2020/2021.

It is the perspective of the Review Team that the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report will improve CSSC's resource planning, provide clarity on its role, relieve pressure on staff and ultimately address the potential concerns raised by stakeholders on CSSC's ability to deliver its functions effectively.

Appendix 1: Grading of Posts

The School Governance Team of the Department of Education asked the Education Authority (EA) Job Evaluation Manager to undertake a review, using job evaluation, of the grading of all the posts currently in the structure of the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC).

At an initial meeting held on the 15 February 2018 the EA highlighted that best practice suggested it was too early in the life of the CSSC to undertake a full scale job evaluation as both the posts and post-holders would have had insufficient time to develop to their full potential. In the EA, it is agreed that a post can only be considered for evaluation provided a period of two years has elapsed since it was last examined and significant change has been identified.

It was agreed to adopt this course of action and the roles were not evaluated.

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