

## Media Release

7/07/2010

### **More choice for parents and greater community involvement Could Sweden's 'free schools' work in Scotland?**

As the debate begins in Scotland over trust status for schools, the latest issue of *Children in Scotland* magazine published today looks at privately managed schools for which parents don't pay – the so-called 'free schools' that have been a feature of Swedish education for the last 20 years – to see if they could work here.

In an exclusive interview, Marie Sedvall Bergsten, director of education at the Skolverket – the Swedish national agency for education – talks about the forthcoming Education Act that aims to tighten regulations on the free schools amid concerns over social segregation.

East Lothian cabinet member for education and children's services Peter MacKenzie tells the magazine:

"We strongly believe in getting communities more involved in education and in increasing efficiency in education. We think community-based management of schools might achieve both of these. Community-based management would help us to take decision making about the essentials back to communities themselves."

However Terry Lanagan, executive director of educational services for West Dunbartonshire Council, warns readers:

"Parents and teachers should not underestimate the scale of the task involved in establishing and maintaining a school outwith local authority control. It would be very challenging for free schools to replicate the support currently provided by local authorities."

The magazine includes interviews with Eva Lod, director of the quality and development unit in the educational administration office of Vallentuna (on the outskirts of Stockholm), and Ulla Eklund, a free school headteacher.

#### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Skolverket is the central administrative authority for the Swedish public school system for children, young people and adults. It administers government goals and guidelines for education and steers, supports and evaluates the work of municipalities and schools to ensure all pupils have access to equal education.
2. *Children in Scotland* magazine is published monthly and covers a wide range of policy and practice issues of interest to those working with children and families across the children's sector. It is available free to Children in Scotland members or

on subscription. The next issue, in August, will look at Sweden's investment in services for young children and the relationships between its schools, preschools and school age childcare services.

3. **Children in Scotland** is the longstanding national agency for the whole of the children's sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk).

**The July issue also carries an interview with Bill Maxwell, new senior chief inspector at HMIE, and a look at the research underpinning Glasgow City Council's decision to invest in nurture classes across the city.**

**For further information or to request a copy of the magazine contact Tracey Francis  
Email [tfrancis@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:tfrancis@childreninscotland.org.uk) / tel 0131 222 2419**