

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT SERVICE COMMITTEE
22 MAY 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

A CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Summary

This report updates members on progress regarding the implementation of A Curriculum for Excellence. The programme is now at a significant stage in terms of implementation and has major implications for the provision of courses and qualifications in schools. This ongoing development is a major contributor to a number of key commitments in the Programme for Administration.

1. Background

- 1.1 A Curriculum for Excellence is a major programme for ensuring improved delivery of learning and teaching in nursery, primary and secondary schools. This development is a key component of the Ambitious Excellent Schools agenda launched by the Scottish Executive in 2004 and seeks to ensure that all young people on leaving school have acquired the relevant skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life.
- 1.2 Previous developments in delivering the curriculum in schools have been delivered as separate programmes such as 5-14, Standard Grade, Intermediate 1 and 2 courses and revised Higher. The introduction of a Curriculum for Excellence seeks to ensure a continuous coherent and progressive curriculum from nursery education through to 18.

A main feature of the new curriculum is to ensure that pupils develop the following four capacities:-

- Confident individuals
- Successful learners
- Effective contributors
- Responsible citizens

in order to prepare them for the significant challenges and opportunities they will face on leaving school in entering the world of employment, education and training.

- 1.3 The structure of the new curriculum is based across eight curricular areas. These are:

Languages	Mathematics	Sciences
Technologies	Religious & Moral Education	Health and Wellbeing
Expressive Arts	Social Studies	

2. Initial Strategy

- 2.1 In the early stages of this development the Authority focused on two key themes within A Curriculum for Excellence, these are **Achievement** and **Transitions**.

Under **Achievement** schools have been encouraged to ensure that pupils experience a broad range of achievements in addition to attaining in the more formal curriculum. This has meant a wider emphasis being placed on learning through the whole life of the school and on learning in the community. During the Highland Year of Culture additional funding was allocated to schools on an Associated School Group basis in order to support opportunities for achievement. This resulted in a range of projects being delivered across the 29 Associated School Groups in Highland.

In supporting these developments schools have been encouraged to work collaboratively as an Associated Group of primary and secondary schools and their wider learning community to work together on aspects of curricular transition at the three key stages of schooling – from nursery to primary, primary to secondary and secondary to post school. Current developments within **Transitions** have focused on ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to develop key skills in literacy and numeracy as well as supporting their development through health and wellbeing in order that they are effective contributors to their learning as well as becoming successful learners. The Authority has significantly supported literacy development over the last four school sessions and progress in the schools involved have shown improved attainment in literacy. The literacy project started in primary schools is now moving to engage with secondary schools as pupils move through the curriculum.

Current developments are focusing on a numeracy strategy to further support work on numeracy in both primary and secondary schools.

3. Current Developments

- 3.1 During the current school session the authority has run a significant staff development programme to support all class teachers and promoted members of staff, including head teachers, in taking forward aspects of this development programme. In November 2007 every nursery, primary and secondary teacher participated in a full day's training on A Curriculum for Excellence based around 18 events covering all 29 Associated School Groups across Highland. It will be necessary for this staff development programme to continue into school session 2008/09 and future years in order to secure implementation of the revised curriculum and to move towards a new qualification structure.
- 3.2 Following a presentation to the Scottish Parliament by the Cabinet Secretary for Education on 28 April 2008, further detail has been provided on the next stage of development within this programme. The Cabinet Secretary announced a consultation process which will take place from June to October 2008 on a new qualifications framework. A report will come to committee on this consultation process in the autumn. Within this new framework it is proposed that all pupils will undertake a new generalised qualification on S4 which will include a focus on

literacy and numeracy skills. The delivery of the curriculum from nursery through to secondary 3 will be designed against a new framework of new levels of education provision replacing the former 5-14 structure. This new curriculum delivered through key learning experiences and outcomes is designed to ensure that the primary curriculum is more streamlined and de-cluttered and is co-ordinated with a revised secondary curriculum through effective curricular transition arrangements.

- 3.3 Increasingly pupils are expected to experience a blended learning experience by the time they leave school which involves them in work based learning and vocational courses as appropriate. In recent years the authority has piloted Skills for Work and Vocational Pathway courses in collaboration with colleges of education and with local business and employers. Current discussions are being progressed with regard to further expansion of this programme and a report will be taken to committee in due course.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 This programme is the most ambitious and comprehensive review of the curriculum with a key focus on learning and teaching in recent times. Head teachers and education development staff require to manage and support the programme through to 2012/13 when new qualifications are likely to come into place. The programme is overseen by an authority reference group representative of staff in nursery, primary and secondary provision, quality improvement staff and education development officers. The authority strategy continues to evolve as the programme is progressed nationally as advised by our reference group and associated sub-groups.

Recommendation

Members are invited to note the above report and comment on the service implementation strategy and seek further reports as appropriate.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

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Ref: DMD/PA

Background Papers: