

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE - SENIOR PHASE
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
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Author: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out how Falkirk schools plan to implement the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Curriculum for Excellence is a radical reform of Scottish Education. Its stated purpose is to create an education system which will equip young people with the skills, qualities, attitudes and attributes they will require to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The outcomes for young people are neatly summarised in the four capacities:

- successful learners
- confident individuals
- effective contributors
- responsible citizens.

- 2.2 Falkirk Council has set out its aspirations and expectations for Curriculum for Excellence within 'Learning to Achieve' - our strategy for raising attainment. All educational establishments in Falkirk Council are committed to ensuring that educational standards are raised through improved educational experiences and outcomes for **all** young people. To this end, Teachers, Headteachers and the Education Improvement Team are working collaboratively to build the capacity of our staff to take forward the changes in culture, systems and classroom practice required by Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers have been working in Teacher Learning Communities to share their best practice and deepen their understanding of pedagogy that will further enhance young people's learning. Education Services has invested in developing quality professional learning experiences for teachers and school leaders through CPD programmes such as: co-operative learning; active literacy; Teaching and Leading for Understanding. Validation visits and HMIe reports confirm that learning and teaching and curriculum design approaches are being refined to meet the needs of Curriculum for Excellence in Falkirk Schools.

- 2.3 Curriculum for Excellence has re-defined the curriculum around four contexts for learning:

- curriculum areas and subjects
- the ethos and life of the school
- interdisciplinary learning
- opportunities for personal achievements in and beyond the classroom.

2.4 Within Curriculum for Excellence every child and young person is entitled to expect their education to provide:

- A curriculum which is **coherent** from 3-18.
- **A broad, general education**, including well planned experiences and outcomes across all curriculum areas from early years through to S3.
- **A Senior Phase** of education after S3 which provides opportunities to obtain qualifications as well as to continue to develop the four capacities.
- Opportunities to develop **skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work** with a continuous focus on **literacy, numeracy and health and well-being**.
- Support in moving into **positive, sustained destinations** beyond school.
- **Personal support** to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities which Curriculum for Excellence can provide.

3. THE SENIOR PHASE

3.1 The Senior Phase - Context

3.1.1 The 'Senior Phase' refers to the period of education which follows the broad, general education (early years to S3). Most young people will undertake some or all of their Senior Phase in school (S4-S6); others will undertake some or all of their Senior Phase in college or in training placements. Young people in the Senior Phase will continue to develop the four capacities, build their literacy and numeracy skills and begin to build their lifelong portfolio of qualifications. By 2016 all national qualifications will have been reviewed to bring them in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

3.1.2 Preparation for the senior phase will begin in the foundations laid in the broad, general education. There is no ceiling on the level at which young people can learn in the broad, general education. During the broad, general education young people who have demonstrated they have covered all of the Experiences and Outcomes of Level 3 will have opportunities if appropriate to their learning to stretch their learning into fourth and fifth level Experiences and Outcomes within National 4 and National 5 qualifications. This will be achieved through opportunities for personalisation and choice within a curriculum designed to pave the way to the qualifications framework.

3.1.3 The national qualifications framework has been simplified:

- National 1,2, and 3 replace current Access 1, 2, 3
- National 4 and National 5 replace current Standard Grades and Intermediate 1 and 2
- Higher continues to be the key qualification for university entry
- Advanced Higher and the Baccalaureates in Science, Languages, Expressive Arts and Social Sciences also remain.

3.1.4 The timetable for implementation of the New National Qualifications is as follows:

- **2013/14** the first diet of new and revised qualifications at levels 1- 5 will be introduced. There will be a dual run with existing qualifications.
- **2014/2015** - first revised qualifications at level 6 (Higher); Again there will be a 'dual run' with existing National Courses for Access, Intermediate and Highers;
- **2015/2016** - first revised qualifications at level 7 (Advanced Higher).

- 3.1.5 Falkirk schools are working to implement the new qualifications without any risk to young people's education. The current National Qualifications at Access, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher will still be available in 2013-14 and 2014-15 to young people who have followed the current curriculum.
- 3.1.6 Secondary teachers have had the opportunity to feedback to SQA on the design of the new qualifications (National 1-5) and have had the opportunity to attend professional learning sessions with staff from SQA.
- 3.1.7 Education Services has nominated a group of teacher verifiers to SQA. These teachers will support colleagues in verifying the new qualifications and will be responsible for ensuring the appropriate standards are understood.

3.2 **The Senior Phase – Purposes**

The purposes of the curriculum in the Senior Phase are to provide all young people with:

- An experience which builds on their learning across the eight curriculum areas in the broad, general, education with scope to develop their individual potential.
- A broad preparation for adult life, whether their destination be further/higher education or employment or volunteering, and for participation in wider society.
- Opportunities to further develop literacy, numeracy, health and well-being and a wide range of skills for life, skills for work and skills for learning.
- Opportunities to begin to build a portfolio of qualifications and awards.

3.3 **The Senior Phase - Entitlements**

Every young person is entitled to a Senior Phase which:

- Provides opportunities for specialisation, depth and rigour.
- Prepares them for achieving a range of qualifications at the highest level of which they are capable.
- Develops skills for life, work and learning.
- Promotes Health and Well-Being.
- Provides a range of activities which develop the four capacities.
- Facilitates an appropriate offer of post 16 learning for their chosen pathway.
- Supports them to achieve a positive sustained destination.
- Is delivered through motivating coherent learning programmes.
- Provides opportunities to contribute to decision making.
- Provides an opportunity to experience the workplace at an appropriate point within the senior phase.
- Provides access to vocational and academic learning experiences.
- Provides access to careers information, advice and guidance.

3.4 **The Senior Phase - Design**

- 3.4.1 The key design principles of Curriculum for Excellence: challenge and enjoyment, breadth, depth, progression, personalisation and choice, coherence and relevance apply to learning programmes within the Senior Phase. There will be a particular emphasis on **depth of learning** in the Senior Phase. This will facilitate a reduction in the amount of assessment and will allow young people and their teachers to focus on raising the quality of qualifications achieved.
- 3.4.2 Schools in Falkirk strive, within available resources, to provide flexible, personalised approaches to ensure that all young people are able to embark on their chosen post 16 pathways with confidence and appropriate qualifications.

3.5 **The Senior Phase: Expectations**

- 3.5.1 Education Services' approach to the development of the Senior Phase recognises the need to balance autonomy and local context with the need to ensure consistency of opportunity across the authority. Consequently, a high level curriculum map has been created, which allows schools and their partners to continue to respond flexibly to the needs of young people whilst operating within an agreed framework. This curriculum map is expressed as a statement of expectations. (Appendix 1)
- 3.5.2 The authority statement of expectations provides a context within which schools, can, in association with appropriate partners, design a Senior Phase which best meets the needs of their young people and delivers the Senior Phase entitlements set out in 3.3.
- 3.5.3 The statement of expectations will be used by Headteachers and the Education Improvement Team to quality assure the Senior Phase in each secondary school.
- 3.5.4 Education Services recognises that during the transition from the current Senior Phase to full implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, Senior Phase schools may have to compromise on the full delivery of Curriculum for Excellence entitlements due to incompatibilities between the two systems. The development of the Senior Phase will be closely monitored during this transition period. (2013-2016)

3.6 **The Senior Phase - Implementation**

The Senior Phase is being implemented in all our secondary schools:

- Each school has produced, in consultation with young people, their parents/carers, partners and the authority, a plan for the Senior Phase which reflects the expectations set out in the high level curriculum map.
- Each school's plan for the Senior Phase has been validated by Education Services.
- Each school is developing learning programmes and experiences which are appropriate to its own context and the needs of its young people.
- Each school's curriculum design facilitates partnership working. Schools are seeking to work in collaboration with each other, Forth Valley College, Community Learning and Development, the Employment and Training Unit, Employers and Skills Development Scotland.
- The recently appointed Opportunities for All Co-ordinator is working in collaboration with partners to ensure that opportunities for flexibility in curriculum design are maximised.
- Each school is working with the Opportunities for All Co-ordinator to ensure effective and efficient transfer of data to ensure positive progression pathways for all young people.

- Schools and partners are planning for increased flexibility within the curriculum. For example, some young people may sit Highers in S4, some may take them over two years, some may bypass lower level qualifications, some may undertake extended work experience programmes.
- The number of learning programmes or subjects a young person studies and the range of experiences undertaken throughout the Senior Phase will be a matter for negotiation, based on an assessment of the needs and abilities of the young person towards the end of S3. It is likely to be between 5-7 in any school session.
- Young people and their parents are being encouraged to plan their Senior Phase as a three year programme and to take account of the entry requirements for their preferred pathways whether these be employment and training, Further Education, or Higher Education
- Schools are planning opportunities for all young people to develop skills for life, work and learning through the range of learning experiences provided by the Senior Phase

3.7 The Senior Phase - Outcomes

- 3.7.1 It is expected that most young people will continue with Literacy and Numeracy to the highest level they can. For many this will be National 5. It is recognised, however, that a small number of young people may not be able to progress beyond National 3 or National 4. The focus on functional literacy within the new qualifications will be of benefit to this group of young people.
- 3.7.2 There will be greater emphasis on the **quality** of qualifications and on the **breadth** of achievements. It is anticipated that, as young people focus on fewer subjects in more depth, with more time to consolidate their learning, attainment and achievement will increase.
- 3.7.3 The intended outcome is that young people will emerge from the Senior Phase with enhanced interpersonal and employability skills, increased resilience and greater personal ambition.
- 3.7.4 The intended outcome is that the flexibility afforded by the Senior Phase will improve the capacity of young people to sustain a positive destination post 16.

4. MEASURING SUCCESS

- 4.1 Schools are currently measured on pass rates on a range of SQA performance data at the end of S4, S5, S6. It has been recognised nationally that this system will not adequately support the evaluation of continuous improvement within Curriculum for Excellence. As a result, Education Services has been using analysis of a wider range of data to evaluate performance and inform planning.
- 4.2 A new National analytical tool is currently under development and it is anticipated that from 2014 this tool will be used by schools and local authorities to evaluate performance. Within the criteria set the tool will provide information on the following:
- **Positive destinations**
This will focus on initial destinations but future work will provide data on **sustained** destinations. Work will also be undertaken to incorporate contextual information on local and national economic circumstances. This will include providing a link to Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics.
 - **Literacy and numeracy**
Information will be provided on literacy and numeracy at the end of the Senior Phase.

- **Attainment for all**

Information will be provided on attainment for all young people. This will include information on the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers. A socio-economic gradient of attainment mapped against SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) indicators and destinations data will be developed.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Secondary Schools in Falkirk are well placed to take forward the implementation of the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence.
- 5.2 The appointment of the Opportunities for All Co-ordinator will support the further development of pathways to positive destinations.
- 5.3 Education Services will require to monitor closely the implementation of each school's Senior Phase plan to ensure that the Senior Phase delivers the diversity of provision and flexible routes and pathways required to meet the needs of young people in Falkirk.

6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 That Education Executive approves:

- (i) the statement of expectations set out as Appendix 1; and
- (ii) for schools to have the flexibility within the parameters of the statement of expectation to agree the structure of their senior phase courses and programmes in negotiation with their stakeholders based on local need and circumstance.

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Director of Education

Date: 16 May 2013

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

