

Andrew Sutherland: Director of Education

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Falkirk Council
Education Services

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To: Parents/Carers of Secondary School Pupils

Dear Parent/Carer

Curriculum for Excellence : New Timetabling Model

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on 29 January 2013, Education Committee agreed that Falkirk secondary schools adopt a 33 period week timetabling structure from August 2014. This would replace the current 30 period week.

Reasons for change

The rationale for this change is that a 33 period week assists schools to implement Curriculum for Excellence more effectively. Greater timetabling efficiency permits them to maximise the time that teachers can teach in classrooms. Overall, this makes better use of the available staff resources to deliver the curriculum for all young people. It does not mean that young people spend longer at school, just that the structured week is organised differently.

The introduction of the 33 period week would mean that:

- The number of teaching periods available for pupils is increased.
- Schools will be provided with an opportunity to utilise additional teaching time to implement the entitlements of the Curriculum for Excellence. For example, by providing additional courses and programmes or indeed using the additional periods for inter-disciplinary learning and co-operative teaching as well as further developing opportunities for personal achievement within the Broad General Education in S1-3 and the Senior Phase in S4-6.
- The model will enable schools to sustain a broad curriculum by, for example, sustaining or indeed increasing the number and range of courses available in the senior school.

In effect, an additional three periods a week for pupils means that curriculum choice can be improved and schools will have more flexibility to add additional opportunities without an impact on options that are already popular with young people. Such flexibility is invaluable to schools as they design and implement the new national courses underpinning the Curriculum for Excellence.

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Changes to school start/finish times

A 33 period week timetabling structure does mean that there is a differential in the number of periods per day across the week: there will be some 7 period days with the balance as 6 period days. The configuration of the period allocation over a five day period which best fits the needs of your school will be explained to you during the consultation.

It is important to note that the overall time spent in school subjects for pupils would not change from what presently occurs. The difference is that to benefit from the opportunity of 33 periods as opposed to 30 periods means that a standard 5 x 6 period day is not possible.

A significant number of local authorities have the 33 period week structure already in place and in many schools the young people have used the different finish times for a variety of purposes - including extra-curricular activity or indeed additional study time. Teachers have also seen it as an opportunity for joint work, staff meetings and continuing professional development at school and with colleagues in the primary sector.

School consultation on implementation

It was agreed at Education Committee that each secondary school should develop and consult on the detailed structure of the teaching day and week that best meets its needs and plans for implementing Curriculum for Excellence, within the overall parameters set by the Council. Your school will therefore consult with you as well as with pupils, staff and Parent Councils and staff on the school's preferred structure and we will report back their findings to Education Committee by May/June of this year.

As your school carries out this consultation exercise, I hope that you will take the time to express your views so that we can, together, design a planned week that enables our schools to better implement Curriculum for Excellence and deliver an education that meets the needs of all our young people.

Thank you for your assistance in taking this development forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Sutherland', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Sutherland
Director of Education

Our Ref: AS/AN