

a curriculum for excellence

ministerial response



RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS



EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

a curriculum for excellence

ministerial response

© Crown copyright 2004

ISBN: 0-7559-4373-2

Scottish Executive
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Produced for the Scottish Executive by Astron B37985 11/04

Published by the Scottish Executive, November, 2004

Further copies are available from
Blackwell's Bookshop
53 South Bridge
Edinburgh
EH1 1YS

The text pages of this document are printed on recycled paper and are 100% recyclable.



contents

de-cluttering the curriculum in primary schools	3
overhauling the curriculum in S1 to S3	4
recognising achievement in S1 to S3	5
new courses in skills-for-work	6
review of the science curriculum	7
assessment 3-14	7
Age and Stage regulations	8
National Qualifications S3 to S6	8
school/college partnerships	8
using <i>A Curriculum for Excellence</i> to improve teaching and learning 3-18	9
implementing the changes	9
accountability	10
conclusion	10





ministerial response

In the light of the principles and purposes emerging from *A Curriculum for Excellence*, which we accept in full, we will set in motion a programme of work to address issues which we know need to be tackled as a matter of priority. These developments will be part of the process of creating a single, coherent, Scottish curriculum 3-18.

De-cluttering the curriculum in primary schools

We will revise and streamline curriculum guidelines to free up space for children to achieve and teachers to teach, for implementation in 2007.

Many areas of the primary school curriculum work very well, but in some areas there is a clear need to streamline the existing guidelines to free up space for more challenge and enjoyment, and to help to raise attainment. There is also a need to make sure that all children experience a smooth change as they move from their pre-school experience into primary 1, and from primary 7 into secondary school. Streamlined guidelines will therefore be developed from the existing curriculum for children 3 to 5 and the 5-14 guidelines, and using the purposes and principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence* as the guide for the task. This will:

- › **make guidelines more fit for their purpose by providing the right level of detail for teachers – maintaining the current level of specificity where that makes sense**
- › **remove unnecessary detail from existing 5-14 guidelines in curriculum areas such as Expressive Arts and Environmental Studies to allow teachers more flexibility and scope to provide rich and varied experiences, and reduce the time spent on assessment**
- › **bring the 3 to 5 and 5-14 curriculum guidelines together to ensure a smooth transition in what children have learned and also in how they learn. This will mean extending the approaches which are used in pre-school into the early years of primary, emphasising the importance of opportunities for children to learn through purposeful, well-planned play**



This would mean that a teacher will be clearer about the purpose and essential outcomes of learning and will have the freedom to plan a wide range of challenging experiences more flexibly, assessing only what needs to be assessed.

Overhauling the curriculum in S1 to S3

We will deliver new guidance on a reformed approach to education in S1 to S3 which will increase opportunities for challenge, choice and motivation, for implementation from 2007.

We need to address the long-standing problem of a lack of focus and motivation for many young people in the early part of their secondary schooling. *A Curriculum for Excellence* now defines purposes and is the basis for establishing much clearer outcomes for this stage of schooling. We will also address issues of progression and articulation between early and later secondary stages. We will do this by:

- › **issuing clear statements of the outcomes which each young person should aspire to achieve during this period, including literacy, numeracy, and other essential attributes and skills. Existing guidelines will be used as the basis of the work, together with the best of Standard Grade and National Qualifications. As in primary, content will be reduced where this makes sense, opening up scope for more opportunities for work in depth and of greater rigour**
- › **ensuring that all children are enabled to maintain their progress in learning as they move from primary to secondary school**
- › **ensuring that opportunities for in-depth activities which extend across and beyond subjects (for example, challenging projects, sustainable development, health promotion, and sports, arts, cultural, community and work-related activities) lie at the heart of the curriculum, not as add-ons**
- › **identifying clearly the contributions of each subject to the achievement of the outcomes**
- › **introducing scope for greater choice, earlier, within a curriculum which first and foremost ensures that young people have a broad education which enables them to achieve a wide range of outcomes. They will be able to make choices from a broad range of in-depth activities. Once essential outcomes have been achieved, they will be able to choose which areas of learning they wish to pursue in more depth**

Because schools will have flexibility in how they implement the new guidance for S1 to S3 they might, for example: use quite different ways of organising learning, timetabling and class grouping; introduce greater choice at the end of S1; group appropriately by attainment (by setting rather than streaming); use more mixed-age classes; or have periodic non-timetabled weeks to allow work on challenging projects. Whatever mix of approaches is used, the purposes of the S1 to S3 curriculum will be clear – to enable all young people to develop their attributes and capacities, as set out in *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

Pathfinder work will be encouraged immediately, with full implementation from 2007. Work on timetabling models is already underway.

Recognising achievement in S1 to S3

We will deliver a new way of recognising the achievements and attainment of all young people from S1 to S3 from 2007.

To improve motivation and attainment in early secondary it is crucial that this stage of education is fully recognised as meaningful and important. We need to ensure that pupils' achievements are encouraged and acknowledged, to help to develop self-esteem and to stimulate ambition for future learning. We will do this by:

- › **a new means of recording achievement which fits the purposes of learning in S1 to S3**
- › **working with teachers to achieve robust methods of assessing young people's achievements in ways which are appropriate to their learning – for example through a mix of traditional assessment methods, self-assessment, and recording evidence of a performance. The approach must command confidence and not be intrusive into learning and teaching**
- › **ensuring that the record can easily be updated as each young person progresses, to give a statement of latest and best achievements**

This will mean that a young person will build up a record of their attainment and broad achievements which will be recognised and valued by themselves, parents, employers, colleges and universities - a 'passport' to further learning and work. It might, for example, record their attainment in essential outcomes of learning, their success in a school musical performance, their contribution as a member of a team which solved a tricky design problem, and other latest and best achievements.



This process will also address the relationship between Standard Grade and new National Qualifications - a commitment set out in *Educating for Excellence*. This will include a process of alignment with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

Any changes to qualifications would take account of the necessary timetable for consultation and implementation.

New courses in skills-for-work

We will deliver a new course and qualification in learning about skills-for-work for 14-16 year olds by 2007.

There is a need for more high-quality courses which will extend choice and increase young people's motivation and enthusiasm for learning. We will achieve this by:

- › **developing new courses, many of which will be offered in partnership with colleges, to allow young people to develop important knowledge and skills for employment through practical experiences linked to particular careers, such as engineering**
- › **developing assessment for these courses which fits the purposes of the learning, and qualifications which will sit alongside their other subject-based qualifications**

This will mean, for example, that a young person who has a particular interest in child development could: choose to attend college for part of the school week to learn about this area; carry out a work placement in a nursery; be assessed on his or her knowledge and in outcomes such as communication, planning and other skills; and receive a qualification which is valued by employers and further and higher education.

Piloting will begin in 2005.

Review of the science curriculum

A cycle of continuous updating and reform of the curriculum across all areas of learning will begin immediately, starting with the science curriculum 3-18.

It is clear that the current science curriculum needs to be updated, expanded and improved. As the first of a sequence of reviews of each area of learning in turn, all of the existing science curriculum will be assessed against the principles and purposes of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, and the recommendations of earlier and current reviews of science education will be addressed. Unnecessary or outdated content will be removed, gaps will be identified and filled, content will be updated and progression between stages and courses will be smoothed out.

Work will begin in November 2004 for implementation from session 2006-07.

These developments have implications for Assessment 3-14, Age and Stage regulations, National Qualifications and school/college partnerships.

Assessment 3-14

We will make reforms which ensure that assessment supports learning and that there are valid and reliable measures of national levels of attainment in key areas of children's learning.

The Assessment for Learning programme has been very successful in developing teachers' skills in assessing children's learning and using the assessment process to help learning. The consultation on assessment 3-14 sent strong messages about how to improve assessment arrangements in Scotland, and the response to this consultation will be published in November 2004. The proposals will be in keeping with the principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence* and with the other developments.

Details will be published in November 2004.



Age and Stage regulations

The Age and Stage regulations, which say when young people can sit exams, will be abolished and replaced with clear guidance to safeguard young people's interests, in 2005.

This action follows a consultation process, the result of which are available on the Scottish Executive website. The change will allow education authorities and schools to use their professional judgement to decide, in discussion with the young person and parents, when a young person is ready to sit an exam, within a framework of tough accountability for the school. The new arrangements will devolve greater responsibility to schools and remove an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy from the Scottish Qualifications Authority exams process, but will retain clear safeguards to protect young people from pressure to sit exams at too young an age.

National Qualifications S3-S6

We will continue the ongoing review of the National Qualifications structure and courses.

The changes in the curriculum will have implications for National Qualifications courses to ensure there is appropriate articulation and progression. This will include the need to provide a broader range of outcomes in line with the purposes of *A Curriculum for Excellence* and to give recognition for these achievements through accreditation. There is already a process of review of National Qualifications to update them and improve them over time.

School/college partnerships

We will increase and enhance school/college partnerships so that pupils will have a high quality experience in colleges and gain suitable recognition for their work, for implementation in 2005.

The interim report of the School/College Review outlines, among other things, how increased and enhanced partnership working can help learners achieve the principles and purposes of the 3-18 curriculum. Collaboration between schools and colleges can enrich pupils'

experiences and help them to develop the skills they will need for life and work. Our strategy for schools and colleges will spell out how to ensure that these experiences are of a very high quality and that pupils are safe and well supported throughout. Practical matters, such as the qualifications of lecturers and funding, are being considered.

Interim report November 2004; consultation and discussion November 2004 to end January 2005; publication of strategy April 2005; implementation of strategy session 2005-06 onwards.

Using *A Curriculum for Excellence* to improve teaching and learning 3-18

We will help teachers to apply the principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence* to improve teaching, learning and assessment with immediate effect.

A Curriculum for Excellence has profound implications for teaching and learning processes and for the initial and continuing professional development of teachers. It can be used immediately by teachers and educators in early years centres, schools and colleges to examine and improve their practice. We will support this process through professional development events and advice.

Implementing the changes

We need to learn from what has worked best in the past. In developing and implementing detailed policy and guidance we will make full use of the professional knowledge and expertise of the education community to ensure widespread support and commitment. We will engage with parents, employers, universities, colleges and organisations. We will work closely with teachers to ensure that the changes will work in the classroom. Some of these developments will take place quickly, such as the piloting of new skills-for-work courses. Others will take place over the medium to longer term, following consultation with the education and wider community.

Agencies such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and the Scottish Executive Education Department will work in partnership to support these developments.



Accountability

Schools and education authorities will continue to be accountable for the decisions they take about the curriculum they offer, with expectations that they will use arrangements creatively and flexibly and in ways which raise levels of achievement and attainment for all young people. They will be expected to respond to each child's strengths, talents and stage of development, to engage with parents in designing their programmes, and to monitor and improve the quality of what they provide.

HMIE will monitor the quality of educational provision across all sectors and report on what they find. The improvement in national monitoring of achievement and attainment that we plan will further increase transparency of national performance.

Conclusion

This is not a once-and-for-all task but a continuing process. The curriculum must develop and change so that it continues to meet the needs of our young people. There will be a continuing cycle of evaluation, refreshment and renewal, taking account of developments in technologies for learning and in our knowledge and understanding.

We are embarking together on a process which will have a profound influence on the education of our children and young people.



Peter Peacock

Minister for Education and Young People



Euan Robson

Deputy Minister for Education
and Young People



© Crown copyright 2004

This document is also available on the Scottish Executive website:
www.scotland.gov.uk

Astron B37985 11/04

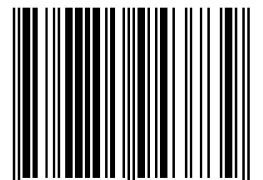
Further copies are available from
Blackwell's Bookshop
53 South Bridge
Edinburgh
EH1 1YS

Telephone orders and enquiries
0131 622 8283 or 0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

Email orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

ISBN 0-7559-4373-2



9 780755 943739