

SCOTLAND'S CURRICULUM – A REFRESHED NARRATIVE

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) with a proposed refreshed narrative on Scotland's curriculum for its consideration.

Background

2. The OECD has made the case for a 'strong fresh narrative' being developed on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), commenting that it could 'powerfully help to galvanise activity and enthusiasm'¹. It recommended a narrative that is succinct, memorable and positive, providing clarity on CfE, ensuring a shared understanding of it and why it is so important.
3. At the second meeting of CAB, members considered the paper '*Curriculum for Excellence – Realising the Benefits in Full*' (CAB-02-01), looking at the extent to which CfE is successful in achieving the educational outcomes intended for children and young people. In discussion the Board agreed that a smaller group of its members and other nominated individuals should look at developing a refreshed narrative for CAB's consideration. A group was established and first met in May. Its membership is attached at Annex A.
4. CAB received an update on the group's initial conclusions and its proposed direction of travel for the narrative at its June meeting. Key points made then, in paper CAB-03-01 and in the board's discussion, were that:
 - the narrative should be for practitioners, providing a single framework that is succinct and which avoids extraneous detail. It should be clear to follow, written in plain English and as jargon-free as possible;
 - it should restate the longstanding aims of CfE while reflecting today's context and should assist in improving coherence and understanding of the direction of travel for Scottish education; and
 - it should be an updated (and, significantly, not a 'revised') narrative that seeks to provide greater clarification, and a consolidation of understanding, in relation to CfE. It was noted that care had to be taken in order to avoid unintended consequences or any sense of re-defining the curriculum which might serve to unsettle the system.

Proposed Narrative

5. The text of the refreshed narrative developed by the group is attached at Annex B.
6. The principal audience for this narrative are the professional practitioners working with children and young people in Scotland's schools and colleges and in our early years, childcare and Community Learning and Development settings. It aims to

¹ OECD (2015). Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective, p.106.

offer practitioners both a 'point of entry' to CfE and a means to consolidate their understanding of CfE. Whilst the narrative is explicit about its intended audience, care has also been taken in its preparation to ensure that it is as accessible as possible to children and young people, parents, communities, employers and other relevant partners and the wider public. The Board should also note that discussions are underway with the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) to develop a complementary narrative aimed at parents and carers as part of the NPFS's 'In a Nutshell' information series. There is also scope to develop a narrative with young people that is specifically aimed at them. This is being explored with the Scottish Learner Panel and CLD Managers Scotland has already offered to facilitate engagement with young people in relation to this.

7. In developing the practitioners' narrative, effort has been made to ensure that the right balance is struck with regard to providing something fresh and updated for a 2019 context, whilst at the same time avoiding an 'end product' that is in any way unrecognisable or which carries risks of being interpreted as something new or significantly different. Therefore, the four capacities, the contexts for learning and the entitlements all feature prominently and should be familiar to all practitioners while there are also updated explanations, a different presentation of the contexts for learning and a greater emphasis placed on the processes ('the how') of curriculum making. The content on processes aims to assist practitioners in taking the principles and ideas of CfE and translating them into meaningful practice to improve learners' experiences through more effective learning, teaching and assessment.

Format and Design

8. The narrative has been prepared with a digital format in mind primarily although there is scope for its core content to also be provided in a hard copy (e.g. booklets and posters) if this was considered worthwhile. Using a digital format allows sign-posting to more detailed guidance and materials which have already been published.
9. Communications specialists have been involved in developing the visual design elements of the narrative in order to ensure that it is as impactful and accessible as possible. The Board will have the opportunity to see and comment on the latest draft design in the meeting.

Engagement and Feedback

10. The group has taken some early opportunities to test working drafts of the narrative (content and design) with some practitioners and other likely users. This has included:
 - Primary and Secondary teachers in Edinburgh and Aberdeen
 - Focus groups of early years and childcare practitioners in Glasgow and Dumfries and Galloway
 - Middle leadership groups from the Tayside and West Partnership RICs
 - Final year ITE students at the University of Stirling

- Recently recruited staff at Education Scotland staff (the vast majority of whom joined from practitioner posts in schools)
- a selection of National Parent Forum of Scotland representatives.

11. Various amendments have been made to the draft content and design of the refreshed narrative based on the feedback received. Changes suggested to date have predominantly been minor refinements and, overall, the feedback has been mostly very positive with clear support for what the Board is seeking to achieve through looking to refresh and update the narrative.

Conclusion

12. CAB members are invited to:

- comment on the proposed refreshed narrative on Scotland's curriculum, including if it:
 - clearly, positively and succinctly communicates the purpose of CfE;
 - shows a clear direction of travel;
 - will be useful and welcomed by practitioners and could serve to bolster professional confidence and engagement in CfE;
- provide views on the design concept presented and on the format (would hard copy versions be worthwhile in addition to a digital format?);
- suggest how the widespread acceptance and adoption of a refreshed narrative might be best achieved in order to make it as effective as possible; and
- consider next steps in seeking to finalise a refreshed narrative.

ANNEX A

Membership of Curriculum Narrative Group

- **Derek Brown**, Head of Education, Youth & Communities, North Lanarkshire Council
- **Fiona Brown***, Vice Principal, Forth Valley College
- **Jean Carwood-Edwards***, Chief Executive, Early Years Scotland
- **Joan MacKay**, Assistant Director, Education Scotland
- **Ken Muir**, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- **Fiona Nicholson**, Vice-Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland
- **Malcolm Pentland**, Head of the Curriculum Unit, Scottish Government (Chair)
- **Mark Priestley**, Professor of Education, University of Stirling
- **Frank Thomson***, Locality Manager, CLD Managers Scotland
- **Pauline Walker**, Rector, Royal High School, Edinburgh
- **Jenny Watson**, Head Teacher, Middleton Park Primary School, Aberdeen to October 2018, then Senior Education Officer, Education Scotland

*: The Group first met on 2 May and then on 4 June. Following the 15 June CAB meeting, three new members joined the group.

ANNEX B

A Draft Refreshed Narrative on Scotland's curriculum
for consideration by the Curriculum and Assessment Board

SCOTLAND'S CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

Introductory Statement:

Scotland's curriculum – the Curriculum for Excellence – helps our children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century.

This narrative has been prepared for professional practitioners. It re-visits the initial Curriculum for Excellence narrative and sets it within the current context. It is designed to stimulate and support ongoing and future thinking about the curriculum.

Page 1: SCOTLAND'S APPROACH

Central to Scotland's curriculum are four fundamental capacities. These capacities reflect and recognise the lifelong nature of the education and learning which is so critical in the development of our children and young people. They recognise the need for them to know themselves as individuals and to develop their relationships with others, in families and in communities. They recognise the knowledge, skills and attributes that they need to acquire to allow them to maximise their potential, to be empowered and adaptable and to thrive in our interconnected, digital and rapidly changing world.

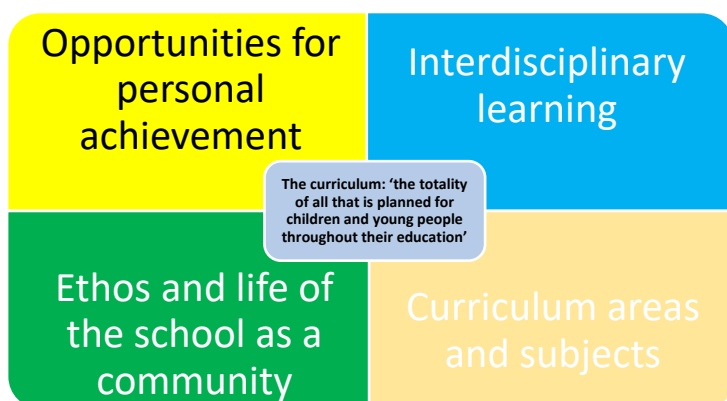


Page 2: WHAT MATTERS?

Scotland is a diverse and multicultural country and every community is unique. Scotland's Curriculum empowers individual education settings to reflect this in relation to learning and to provide a coherent, flexible and enriched curriculum that is adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners.

As part of their learner journey, all children and young people are entitled to experience **a coherent curriculum from 3 to 18**, in order that they have opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to adapt, think critically and flourish in today's world.

Curriculum is defined as the totality of all that is planned for children and young people from early learning and child care, through school and beyond. That totality can be planned for and experienced by learners across four contexts:



[DN: Four Contexts image needs to include short 'pop-up' descriptors of each of the four contexts for learning]

Entitlements

Children's rights and entitlements are central to Scotland's curriculum and every child and young person is entitled to experience:

- a curriculum which is coherent from 3 to 18
- a [broad general education from early years to S3](#), covering all [the curriculum areas](#) with [experiences and outcomes](#) to assist practitioners' planning and [benchmarks](#) to help monitor progress and support overall professional judgement.
- a [senior phase](#) after S3, which provides opportunities to attain and achieve, including to study for [qualifications, awards](#) and other planned activities for developing the [four capacities](#)
- opportunities for developing skills for learning, skills for life and [skills for work](#)
- opportunities to maximise their individual potential, benefitting from appropriate [personal support](#) and challenge
- support to help them move into positive and sustained destinations beyond school

Page 3: **HOW WE DO IT**

Understand the learners

- Know young people and where they are on their individual learner journey – what have they achieved and what do they need?
- Listen to learners and be informed by what motivates them and their aspirations.
- Empower learners to have agency in their learning with opportunities for personalisation and choice.
- Engage in the learning process through using observations and assessments to design and develop the learning.

Know the big ideas

- Know the priorities of delivering excellence and equity for Scottish education and the national drivers of improvement.
- Maximise learning opportunities that develop the four capacities.
- Be clear on the knowledge and skills that underpin individual curriculum areas.
- Be responsible for all learners' literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the whole curriculum.
- Agree the pedagogies that are best for purpose across the four contexts.
- Use local contexts and take account of labour market information when planning the curriculum.
- Influence the future by equipping learners with skills for the future.
- Identify the opportunities for learning across different themes in a connected way.

Be clear on the direction of travel

- Be informed by shared vision, values and aims, both local and national.
- Articulate and share your curriculum rationale and narrative.
- Know where young people are going and keep focused on capacities.
- Review and refine the curriculum against the seven design principles.
- Ensure learners have clear progression pathways, from age 3 to 24.

Use meaningful learning networks

- Plan, enquire and reflect with other practitioners to optimise impact.
- Collaborate with parents, carers, families and the community.
- Develop and maximise the opportunities derived from partnerships across clusters, local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives.
- Build partnerships with colleges, universities, businesses and others to support learning.
- Use outdoor, built and digital settings and cultural heritage to support learning.
- Articulate and share stories, and reflect on and celebrate successes.

Know your own learning and support needs

- Commit to career-long professional learning based around high quality professional standards.
- Belong to communities of practice and enquiry.
- Develop collaborative practice locally, nationally and globally.

Know what can work

- Use intelligence from a range of sources to inform the curriculum offer.
- Identify and seek to address barriers to learning.

- Identify and explore catalysts for positive change.
- Interpret meaningful tracking to inform next steps.