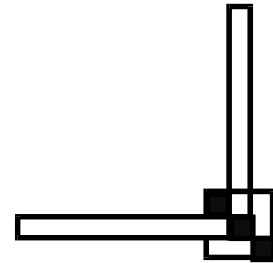


Curriculum Paper



Section A Foreword

Argyll and Bute Council Education serves a population of approximately 90,000 people living in a wide diversity of locations. The Council's schools are therefore located in rural, island and town environments. The Education Establishments include Pre 5 Units, Primary Schools, SEN Units and Secondary Schools ranging in size from the very small to the very large.

Argyll and Bute Council promotes, supports and maintains quality developments and the raising of standards in all establishments and sectors of Community Services: Education.

This common purpose informs the work of all the diverse elements which make up the service.

1. Background

The purpose of this paper is to provide advice to schools which is specific to Argyll and Bute's situation, to identify areas where Community Services will support schools in delivering new practice and to provide a framework for the service's monitoring of the curriculum across all establishments.

The following major reports provide national advice and guidance on the curriculum.

- The Education (National Priorities) Order 2002
- 3-5 Curriculum Framework
- 5-14 Curriculum Guideline

- Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages – Guidelines for Schools (SCCC 1999)
- Organising the Secondary School Curriculum – Principles into Practice (SCCC 1999)
- Achievement for All (HMI 1998)
- Achieving Success in S1/S2 (HMI 1998)
- The National Qualification developments
- Standards in Scotland's Schools (etc) Scotland Act 2000
- SEED circular 3/2001 Guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum (August 2001)

In addition to the above documents a number of guidance statements or documents have been made by Scottish Executive Ministers which influence the curriculum. Important among these is the decision taken in April 1999, to relax the age and stage restrictions as they applied to Standard and Higher Grade presentation.

Establishments will take cognisance of future statements as Scottish Executive policy develops.

2. *Aims and Priorities*

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act provides a national perspective on the broad aims of school education and leads directly to the five National Priorities;

2.1 *Achievement and Attainment*

To raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results.

2.2 *Framework for Learning*

To support and develop the skills of teachers, the self-discipline of pupils and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to teaching and learning.

2.3 *Inclusion and Equality*

To promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser used languages.

2.4 *Values and Citizenship*

To work with parents to teach pupils respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.

2.5 *Learning for Life*

To equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition.

2.6 Service Improvement Plan

These priorities are consistent with those identified within the Service Improvement Plan. This plan is drawn up by the service and reviewed each year.

In that plan Community Services declares its commitment to:

- quality at all stages;
- continuous improvement and raising of standards;
- understanding local needs;
- excellent standards of care;
- treating all fairly and with respect;
- dealing quickly and effectively with concerns and complaints
- developing innovative solutions to problems;
- developing practices that go well beyond minimum requirements as appropriate

3. Curriculum Principles and Delivery

3.1 Curriculum Principles

The service endorses the principles of curriculum design outlined in the National Guidelines which focus on breadth, balance, continuity and progression, coherence and flexibility. It also recognises the importance of a relevant and innovative curriculum designed for the specific circumstances of each school. Curricular choice should be wide

though the amount will vary dependent upon the context of the school, within resources available, and in the context of effective teaching and learning.

3.2 *Delivery of the Curriculum*

These principles of design also require to be complemented by curriculum delivery which focuses on student learning. In this context it is important to take the following principles into consideration:

- learning to think is crucial for independent living and lifelong education
- learning involves emotions and feelings as well as the ability to think and act
- intelligence is not a single general ability, nor is it fixed
- the development of self-esteem, confidence, motivation and a positive sense of community are critical in raising achievement
- the role of challenge and support is important in stimulating pupils
- parents have a crucially important role in the development of positive attitudes to study and learning
- assessment, feedback and reporting promotes effective learning

4. *Effective Teaching and Learning*

The curriculum guidelines, and other documents, make a number of recommendations designed to maximise the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

4.1 *Greater emphasis on direct teaching*

The service endorses a greater emphasis on direct interactive teaching. Several secondary subject areas have recently developed their practice in this area and the use of setting has also encouraged such moves. Direct teaching should be seen as a key technique and one of a range of methods at the disposal of teachers including individual learning, paired learning and group work. Ultimately the decision on the balance of the approaches to be taken is a matter for individual head teachers in schools.

4.2 *Target setting to improve attainment*

Based on good assessment data, target setting can provide all students with a consistent challenge through setting achievement targets. The setting of targets that are realistic, motivating, used in teaching and learning and are negotiated with students can be a powerful tool and the Authority commends such an approach.

4.3 *Tracking and Monitoring*

Many schools have developed structured systems for the tracking and monitoring of pupil progress. Such systems enable departments, management teams and guidance departments for example to take early remedial action, to praise and/or to predict future progress for all students. The increasing sophistication of school management information systems make this a potentially very powerful tool.

All schools will develop systematic pupil tracking and monitoring policy.

5. *Provision for Pupils*

5.1 *Additional Support Needs*

The service is fully committed to offering the best possible education experience to young people with Additional Support Needs. Within the resources available to the service, the following principles will inform practice:

- There will be a presumption of mainstream educational provision for all pupils.
- ASN pupils will be encouraged to access as much of the mainstream curriculum as possible.

- The service's Area Network Support Teams will work closely with pre-school units, schools and Support departments to plan and deliver ASN provision.

ASN provision will take full account of supporting learning and behaviour and will fully utilise Individual Education Plans and Target Setting.

6. *Race Relations Amendment (2000)*

This act gives Argyll and Bute Council a new statutory general duty to promote race equality, to work to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equal opportunities and good race relations. The duty is not optional and local authorities have to meet it even if the ethnic minority populations in their area are small. As part of this duty Argyll and Bute Council has published a race equality scheme. This scheme consists of a strategy and an action plan to meet the general duty and any specific duties.

Section B *The Early Years/ Primary School Curriculum*

A statement of establishment aims and values will shape the policy-making process. Establishments should strive to achieve a clear and dynamic set of principles which are essential to the well being of all our pupils and the society in which they will be growing up. These principles will be contained in the range of policy documents drawn up by establishments.

1. *Curriculum Values*

Consideration of the following set of values should inform the design of the Early Years/Primary Curriculum.

1.1 *Appreciation of Learning*

The establishments should be committed to helping learners achieve an appreciation of learning which includes:-

- a) the development of skills which help individuals to reach their full potential;
- b) a developing understanding of the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed and used;
- c) self-discipline, independent thinking, aesthetic sensitivity;
- d) a commitment to learning as a life-long learning;

1.2 *Respect and Caring for Self*

The establishment should be committed to helping learners develop respect and care for self which includes:-

- a) self-esteem and a feeling of self confidence;
- b) an accurate assessment of personal strengths;
- c) responsibility for self;
- d) the ability and drive to develop towards their full potential.

2. *Respect and Caring for Others*

The establishments should be committed to helping learners develop respect and caring for others which includes:-

- a) recognising that every person is a unique and worthwhile individual;
- b) value racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity;
- c) learning and appreciating the skills of respect and care for others and their worlds;
- d) appreciating the nature of our society and empathising with its laws and customs;
- e) a developing understanding of the importance of a cultural perspective, respect for evidence and freedom of expression as foundation elements of society.

3. *A Sense of Belonging*

The school should be committed to assisting learners at school, supporting their parents and guardians to recognise that they are valued, contributing members of a caring educational community. In addition, it seeks to promote recognition that pupils in school belong to caring communities which include:-

- 3.1** Families, which are generally the first communities children experience and which are the foundation of the child's sense of belonging;
- 3.2** cultural communities which also have a profound influence on many children;
- 3.3** The local communities in and around the school generally;
- 3.4** The wider communities of the United Kingdom, Europe and the World.

4. *Social Responsibility*

The school should be committed to developing, amongst all learners, personal responsibility in society at local, national and international levels. This includes:

- 4.1** Developing skills and attitudes which enable citizens to contribute to the process by which society continues to clarify, review and improve its own values
- 4.2** Respecting processes by which differences of opinion are resolved non-violently within society

- 4.3 Respecting justice
- 4.4 Appreciating the ways in which wealth is generated and the impact of wealth creation on the world community and on the environment
- 4.5 Respecting and caring for the environment
- 4.6 Developing ways whereby individuals and groups can contribute to the well being of the world community

5. Curriculum Design

5.1 Curriculum Design – Early Years

The service endorses the model of curriculum design outlined in *A Curriculum Framework for Children 3-5*.

Curriculum design in pre-school establishments should focus on:

- Emotional, personal and social development
- Communication and language
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Expressive and aesthetic development
- Physical development and movement

5.2 Curriculum Design – Primary

The service endorses the model of curriculum design outlined in the 5-14 National Guidelines: Structure, Breadth and Balance in the Curriculum.

All educational establishments should also take cognisance of Circular 3/2001 - Guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum.

Curriculum design should focus on:

- Breadth
- Balance
- Continuity and Progression
- Coherence and Flexibility

5.3 *Breadth*

It is vital to provide a curriculum which introduces pupils to a variety of ways of examining forms of knowledge, the development of skills and making sense of the experiences, which are presented to them. Through the five main curricular areas and cross-curricular contexts planning should ensure sufficient breadth to enable pupils to gain the essential experiences. This will help them to acquire different types of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions.

5.4 *Balance*

Balance in the curriculum requires establishments to ensure that appropriate time is allocated to each area of curricular activity and that provision is made for a variety of learning experiences.

It is important to note that a balanced curriculum is not only addressed in time allocation to curricular areas but also in:

- providing a range of curricular experiences;
- ensuring a balance of emphasis on knowledge, skills and experiences;
- maintaining a balance over a period of time;
- ensuring a variety of social experiences;
- achieving a balance of teaching and learning approaches.

5.5 Continuity and Progression

Continuity and progression in the curriculum requires establishments to ensure that learning builds on pupils' previous experiences and attainment, prepares them for further learning and provides them with a series of challenging but attainable goals.

Building on the attainment and knowledge already acquired is essential. Teaching and learning is organised to facilitate pupils' progress within and between stages, provides a depth of experience and minimises any discontinuity at key stages. Good progress is achieved through well planned programmes based on the framework of learning outcomes in the 5-14 guidelines. Effective establishment management of the curriculum will ensure continuity.

Setting is an organisational feature in which pupils of similar ability are taught as a group.

Setting in Maths and Language may be a feature in some Primary Schools. Schools will also consult parents and pupils on the principles of any setting initiative.

5.6 Coherence and Flexibility

Coherence and flexibility in the curriculum require an integrated approach which avoid fragmentation.

Teachers should plan for opportunities that will enable pupils to make connections across all curricular areas through application of

their knowledge and skills. Integrated contexts and cross-curricular themes can be of significant benefit to pupils' learning. Coherence across school and community based learning that engages pupil interest is vital as is the use of flexibility to allow schools to reflect their individual circumstances.

6. Key Experiences- Early Years

In the Early Years, play makes a powerful contribution to children's learning . Play provides a focus for active experiential learning and helps to develop a natural curiosity.

Through play, children will have the opportunity to :

- Make sense of real life situations
 - Develop awareness of themselves and others
 - Explore, investigate and experiment
 - Be actively involved in learning
 - Express their ideas and feelings in a variety of ways
-
- Collaborate with others and develop relationships
 - Practice skills, consolidate previous learning and be challenged
 - Experience a sense of achievement

7. *Key Experiences - Primary*

A number of learning experiences are essential and should be integral to the curriculum. These experiences emanate from the principles established in the previous sections.

All pupils will have the opportunity to:

- work co-operatively and independently;
- be challenged and experience a sense of achievement;
- receive regular feedback about their progress;
- take and share responsibility;
- make connections across curricular areas and skills

- participate in thinking, learning and study skills activities
- be involved in community based environmental projects/enterprise activities
- be involved in artistic performances or sporting endeavours
- participate in a range of theatre visits and other cultural events
- participate in team sports as appropriate
- participate in a residential experience/educational visit
- participation in a personal and social development programme
- participate in activities which are designed to ensure a smooth transition at Pre 5 to P1 and P7 to S1

7.1 Co-operative Structure

In 1991 a co-operative structure for schools was formed in Argyll and Bute Division of Strathclyde Region.

Schools were grouped geographically to form a variety of sizes of co-operatives aimed at reducing geographical and professional isolation. Area Co-ordinators were appointed to support and maintain the structure. The co-operatives continue to work successfully to develop resources and share good practice and policies.

Curriculum developments have been shared during the implementations of 5-14.

The co-operative structure has also allowed the development of more effective Primary/Secondary Liaison. Joint projects have enhanced teaching and learning and primary pupils entering a secondary in Argyll & Bute have each had a broadly similar education experience to draw on. Such a process ensures that no pupil should be at a disadvantage entering secondary education

It is essential therefore that the existing structure is consolidated, leading to an increasingly shared vision of education between secondary schools and associated primaries. Head Teachers in primary and secondary schools

will place a high priority on putting formal, resourced arrangements in place to improve curricular links, especially between primary and secondary. The service will specifically co-ordinate the production of curricular materials in a range of subjects to support this.

The recent introduction of Pre 5 Education highlights the need for similar liaison to take place within the co-operatives to ensure continuity and progression between Pre 5 Units and Primaries is achieved.

Section C The Secondary Curriculum

Key Curriculum Features and Pupil Experiences

The secondary school curriculum will be designed and delivered in accordance with the principles contained in section one of this document. The secondary school curriculum will provide continuity from primary school. All secondary schools will have a set of policy statements which articulate these principles. These principles will require a number of features and experiences which will be integral to the secondary school curriculum.

1. *Key Features and Pupil Experiences*

1.1 *Key Features*

Key features ordered, progressive curriculum structure which helps young people to acquire an increasing depth of knowledge and understanding, skills and capabilities;

- appropriate teaching time for each subject;
- high quality teaching which allows students to:
 - work co-operatively and independently;
 - experience challenge and a sense of achievement;
 - obtain regular feedback about their progress;
 - take responsibility for their own learning;
 - make connections across disciplines and skills

1.2 Key Pupil Experiences

Pupils will also have the opportunity to be involved in all of the following range of activities between S1 and S4: -

- participation in a community based activity e.g. an environmental project or enterprise activity;
- participation in an artistic performance or sporting endeavour;
- participation in a variety of cultural events/activities;
- participation in team sports as appropriate
- participation in a personal and social education programme;
- participation in a work experience placement as part of a planned programme of work related activities;
- a planned programme of careers education;
- planned access to personal and curricular guidance;
- participation in thinking, learning and study skills activities;
- opportunity of induction at a HE institution, through campus visits, open days or pre-university summer schools (in S5/6)

2. The Curriculum Framework

The secondary school curriculum will be designed to meet the needs of pupils from the age of 12 to 18. This requires the curriculum to complete the 5-14 programme in the early stages; prepare and present pupils for external examinations in S4 and provide a range of courses for senior pupils which prepare them for the world of work and further and higher education.

This necessitates the framework for the curriculum set for S1/S2 to articulate with that for S3/S4 courses leading to external qualification and similarly for S5/S6. The relaxation of age and stage restrictions for presentation for external examinations allow for curriculum structures to vary from the traditional patterns of S1/S2, S3/S4 and S5/S6 as set out in the Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages (1999).

An important revision to the curriculum guidelines is contained in *Citizens of a Multilingual World*. The service supports the presumption in favour of modern languages study from S1 through to S4. It will be a matter for individual establishments to formulate a policy consistent with the guidelines contained in the document. The provision and promotion of Gaidhlig is a priority within Argyll and Bute.

(a) Gaidhlig

Pupils who have completed their primary education within a Gaelic Medium Unit will transfer to their associated secondary school where arrangements will be made to ensure a continuum between primary and secondary Gaelic Medium provision.

Community Services will endeavour to establish facilities for the delivery of secondary education through the medium of Gaelic in secondary schools with associated primary Gaelic provision. The establishment of secondary Gaelic Medium provision will be subject to the availability of Specific Grant Funding and suitably qualified secondary staff.

The service will ensure that all pupils transferring to Gaelic Medium secondary provision will have access to Gaidhlig (Fluent Speakers) and PSE through the medium of Gaelic as part of the S1/S2 course where staffing permits.

The service will also encourage establishments to support Gaelic Medium pupils to develop their fluency, competence and confidence in Gaelic by offering selected subjects through the medium of Gaelic, where staffing permits and number of pupils are sufficient to ensure quality interaction.

(b) Gaelic

Gaelic as a second language is made available to pupils as part of the S1/S2 curriculum in several schools. Pupils are encouraged to build on their previous learning in Primary schools and develop their competence in Gaelic while also acquiring greater knowledge of Gaelic heritage and culture. Gaelic will

be one of the course options for S3 and S4 pupils in the secondary schools offering Gaelic and opportunities will also exist for pupils to continue their studies in S5/S6.

Schools wishing to introduce an element of choice in the study of Gaelic in S1/S2 should ensure that full consultation takes place with student, parents, parents' representative bodies and the Director.

2.1 *The Curriculum framework in S1/S2*

In the context of the S1/S2 curriculum, the service endorses the recommendations contained in the Guidelines, and other reports listed in the foreword, in terms of curriculum planning and effective learning and teaching.

2.1.1 *Curriculum Planning*

i) Setting

The HMI report 'Achievement for All' recommended that broad band setting based on prior attainment be introduced in S1 and S2 for English and Mathematics, and possibly also for Science and Modern Languages in S2.

Schools should take cognisance of the fact that setting based on prior attainment allows a focussing of resources, pace of learning and teaching styles where they can be most effective. Schools are encouraged to consider such approaches with the proviso that:

- setting is on the basis of prior attainment;
- movement between sets is possible;
- the ethos of the teaching and learning process is inclusive

Schools will also consult parents and students on the principles of any setting initiative. Such an approach also underlines further the need for good primary/secondary information exchange and curricular articulation within the co-operative.

2.2 Course Duration

'Achieving Success in S1/S2' recommends that course duration should be fixed at around 160 minutes per week. In Argyll and Bute this represents three periods per week. The subjects complying with this time allocation are English, Maths, Modern Languages, Science and Social Subjects.

The recommendations suggest that a further two or more subjects that operate on one or two periods per week should be linked to provide the minimum allocation of 160 minutes through rotations. Rotations can be constructed over 1 or 2 sessions.

The service foresees that technical difficulties could arise with rotations, such as reduced timetable flexibility, workload bottlenecks and uneven progression through S1 and S2.

However, use of such rotations is not proscribed though any such arrangements will require clear evidence of need, appropriate consultation and clear benefits in terms of better quality provision for students. Suitable arrangements will also require to be made to facilitate meaningful reporting. Rotational arrangements will specifically ensure that clear progression takes place between the beginning of S1 and the end of S2.

2.3 *Number of Subjects*

The subjects taught in S1/S2 should conform to six key criteria. Each course should not be included in the S1/S2 curriculum unless it:

- builds on prior learning at the primary stage;
- leads to enduring and worthwhile outcomes which can be reported within the 5-14 framework of levels and targets;
- deals with skills and knowledge which could not be taught successfully through another subject in the S1/S2 curriculum;
- is allocated sufficient time for effective teaching to take place, normally a minimum of 160 minutes per week over a sustained period and a total of at least 100 hours (with the possible exception of PSE);
- provides a sound basis for subsequent study in depth;
- is supported by appropriate staff and resources.

The service endorses the general principle that schools should not seek to expand the number of subjects in S1/S2 and where a reduction is possible this should enable improved coherence and more efficient use of resources. Continuity of provision and progression to S5/S6 should also be a factor in S1/S2 subject provision.

3. *The Curriculum Framework in S3/S4*

Several of the issues relevant to S1/S2 also pertain to S3/S4, particularly setting, direct teaching, target setting and tracking/monitoring.

There are two major issues, curriculum flexibility and the inclusion of core skills which are particularly relevant to this stage.

3.1 *Curriculum Flexibility*

The Scottish Executive Education Department Circular 3/2001 Circular on Flexibility complements the 1999 relaxation of age and stage restrictions. Community Services endorses the Scottish Executive's encouragement of flexibility and innovation in the curriculum. There are many possible examples of curriculum flexibility which schools should consider in the S3/S4 curriculum.

The following are some illustrations: -

- introduction of National Units earlier than S3/4 for some pupils.
- offering mixture of Standard Grade and new National Units (eg Foundation level in S3 followed by Intermediate 1 in S4).
- replacing of Standard Grade courses with National Units and courses in S3/4.
- certification at Credit level in S3 for the most able pupils in English.

- introduction of Standard Grade at S2 in specific subjects for some or all pupils.
- possibility of forming non age-related groups in S1/S2

When introducing measures of flexibility, schools should ensure that: -

- there is a clear rationale for the change
- consultation has taken place with all stakeholders and a general consensus achieved.
- there is a clear implementation programme with related plans and training.
- there are monitoring and evaluation processes in place
- there is a clear focus on improvement of students' attainment

The service supports such flexible and innovative curriculum design when in the best interest of students' and the development of specific proposals in this area should be a matter for individual schools in light of their own circumstances.

The above should also be seen in light of the service's interim policy statement on Higher Still, agreed by the Council in December 2000.

3.2 *The Inclusion of Core Skills*

The delivery of Core Skills, which could contribute to post-16 Group Awards, is a feature of S3/S4 curriculum planning.

There may be considerable advantage in students achieving the necessary core skills in S3/S4 thus precluding the need for extensive alteration of S5/S6 structures. If it is assumed that Literacy, Numeracy and Problem Solving will be embedded in a range of subjects, the delivery of IT and Working with Others remains problematic. Inclusion of these Core Skills, in the form of National Qualification units, should be actively considered by schools as they plan their delivery of Group awards.

4. *The Curriculum Framework in S5/S6*

All schools will conform to the national curriculum guidelines. The ability of secondary schools in Argyll and Bute to implement the guidelines are strongly influenced by the considerable variations in the school size and opportunity to both cooperate with each other and with further education establishments. In addition the requirement to provide progression and incorporate core skills is particularly challenging. In order to provide an appropriate curriculum schools will require to consider alternative delivery mechanisms such as open learning particular web-based courses. In addition joint curriculum planning will have to be considered in order to maximise the benefits of new technology such as video-conferencing.

This policy will be reviewed in 2008/09