

The Senior Phase (S4-S6) Of Curriculum for Excellence

In Renfrewshire Secondary Schools

Introduction

This document is intended to inform discussion between parents, pupils and teachers and teachers' professional associations on the future design of the curriculum in the senior phase (S4-S6) of Renfrewshire secondary schools. Any alteration to the curriculum in the senior phase has to be undertaken within the context of the new national curriculum "Curriculum for Excellence" and aspire to deliver for young people a greater potential to achieve at higher levels than has previously been the case.

In exploring options for the structure of the curriculum for the senior phase education and leisure services (ELS) has worked closely with all Renfrewshire secondary head teachers. Various options have been explored within the contexts of the national Curriculum for Excellence "Building the Curriculum" documentation, curriculum structures that are emerging across Scotland and the implementation timeline for new national qualifications.

Aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence seeks to ensure that all young people from ages 3-18 develop their capacities to become: successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens; and effective contributors. Through the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence young people will have the opportunity to develop their skills and competences. Curriculum for Excellence aspires to transform learning and teaching approaches to improve achievement and attainment for all young people. It seeks to reduce the burden of assessment (and teaching to the test) and to allow young people to spend more time to broaden their learning and apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts. Crucially, with regard to attainment, Curriculum for Excellence aspires to deliver for young people a greater potential to achieve at higher levels than previously.

A Broad General Education

Curriculum for Excellence makes clear the expectation that all young people are entitled to a 'broad general education' until the end of S3. This entitlement provides that all children and young people have the opportunity to engage and make progress with the experiences and outcomes across all eight curricular areas up to and including the third level of Curriculum for Excellence.

The curriculum is organised into eight curriculum areas. These are:

- health and well-being;
- languages;
- mathematics;
- sciences;
- social studies;
- expressive arts;
- technologies; and

- religious and moral education.

The purpose of the S1-S3 phase is *that all young people will have a strong platform for later learning and for successful transition to qualifications at the right level for them.*

Renfrewshire Council has developed an S3 Curriculum Model that will ensure that the aims and principles as set out with Curriculum for Excellence of all young people having an entitlement to a 'broad general education' are adhered to. The model ensures that young people will continue to work with experiences and outcomes at the third level across all eight curricular areas as required. It also ensures that young people who have progressed beyond the third level are able to make progress with fourth level experiences and outcomes, through selection of more focussed areas of study from across the eight curricular areas. The model affords young people with a degree of choice and to make progress in subject areas in which they may ultimately seek formal qualifications.

Pupils who are currently completing S2 will continue their Broad General Education within this model through the course of next year.

The Senior Phase

Renfrewshire Council is committed to designing a senior phase of education across all eleven secondary schools that is suited to ensuring that the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence as set out above are met.

The senior phase of the curriculum is the stage where it is expected that most young people will engage with the qualifications framework and that more formal assessment and certification will take place.

The purposes of the senior phase are to provide all learners, whatever their individual needs and abilities, with:

- *an experience which builds on their learning in S1 to S3 with scope to develop their individual potential;*
- *a broad preparation for adult life, whether their own next stage is further/higher education or employment or volunteering, and for participation in wider society;*
- *opportunities to extend their own abilities and interests;*
- *opportunities to study at as advanced levels as possible, to a high degree of rigour;*
- *opportunities for a range of personal achievements, in or out of school;*
- *recognition of achievement, both attainment of qualifications and wider achievements; and*
- *continued emphasis on literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and the development of a wide range of skills for life and skills for work.*

Transition to the Senior Phase

There are a number of potential 'pathways' for young people as they move beyond the broad general education to the Senior Phase. Consideration has been given to curriculum structures that allow for 5, 6, 7 and 8 course choices as pupils move from S3 to S4.

ELS and all secondary head teachers in Renfrewshire have agreed at this stage of Curriculum for Excellence implementation, that there are benefits in all schools implementing the same curricular structure in terms of the number of course choices available.

The preferred senior phase structure is to offer young people the opportunity to make 7 subject choices as they move from S3 to S4. This approach will have the following benefits:

- there will be more time for study in each subject area than in the present system;
- a 7 choice structure will maintain a breadth of learning across the curriculum;
- concerns among parents and pupils regarding a significant reduction in the number of qualifications taken are addressed;
- the learning needs of young people will be met through delivery of a broad range of courses at National 3,4 and 5 Levels in S4 and opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work;
- young people will make further informed subject choices as they move from 7 courses in S4 to 5 courses in S5;
- opportunities will exist for young people to return to subjects taken in S4 but not taken in S5 when in S6;
- the structure will support young people to leave school for positive destinations (university, college, work or training) through progression across a range of subject areas and tailored skills courses; and
- the common approach across Renfrewshire will provide consistency of opportunity for all of our young people.

Engagement with parents, pupils and staff

Head teachers and ELS officers will meet with parents in all secondary schools in late May and early June to discuss the senior phase. Parents will be invited to ask questions at these meetings and to provide comment and feedback on the preferred structure outlined above. Head teachers will also meet with teaching staff and with pupils to gather and collate their views.

Parents may also submit comments to: schools.els@renfrewshire.gov.uk