

**ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

21 APRIL 2011

‘SKILLS FOR LEARNING, LIFE AND WORK’ – THE ANGUS SKILLS SET

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to brief the Education Committee about support provided to Angus schools in implementing national Curriculum for Excellence expectations in relation to the development of key skills.

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee
- (i) note the terms of this report
 - (ii) note that copies of Angus Council’s guidance in respect of Skills for Learning, Life and Work are available electronically at
<https://portal.glowscotland.org.uk/establishments/anguscouncil/ASP/Skills/default.aspx>
 - (iii) note the focus and outcomes of a local pilot exercise
 - (iv) note the interest from other authorities and from Learning and Teaching Scotland in related Angus developments.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Our education system is currently preparing young people for a world of work where the pace of change and innovation is unprecedented. In such an environment, knowledge quickly becomes dated and it will be the essential underlying skills for learning, life and work that will retain their currency. Equipping learners with skills which will prepare them for jobs that do not yet exist is an inescapable challenge for the education system.
- 2.2 The Scottish Government has made plain its commitment to the development of lifelong skills within the national skills strategy, **‘Skills for Scotland: a Lifelong Skills Strategy’** whose central ambition is stated thus:
- “Scotland’s greatest asset is our people..... Investing in our people’s skills, ensuring that skills contribute as much as possible to sustainable economic growth, is central to unlocking our potential”***
- 2.3 The national strategy notes the crucial role that school education plays in supporting young people to **“focus on developing the essential skills”** in order to **“raise their aspirations”** and so **“shape their life chances”**. In short, the imperative for a more coherent approach to the systematic and progressive development of skills for learning, life and work is clear. That imperative lies at the heart of Curriculum for Excellence.
- 2.4 The main messages within a key Curriculum for Excellence publication, **‘Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work (Scottish Government 2009)’** are as follows:
- the development of skills is essential to help young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors

- it is an entitlement for all young people within the new curriculum
- there is a need to establish a common understanding and language around skills development among pupils, parents, school staff and other partners
- skills should be developed within and across the curriculum (their progression is 'signposted' in each curriculum area's 'Experiences and Outcomes' documents)
- the development of the essential skills for learning, life and work should occur in a variety of contexts and through a range of learning experiences appropriate to the needs of learners, including through partnership working and its potential to add value and relevance
- assessment should be largely formative and should promote reflection, identify next steps, increase understanding of the wider application of skills and be based on day-to-day learning

2.5 These messages imply the need for a degree of consistency within and across schools, including the need to establish a 'common language and understanding' around the key skills to be nurtured by and through the new curriculum.

2.6 Schools require guidance and support to achieve a common skills vocabulary, plan for, assess and profile skills progression across key transition stages. '*Skills for Learning, Life and Work in Angus*' provides such guidance and will assist establishments in addressing the main messages within **Building the Curriculum 4** in taking forward the new curriculum.

3 THE 'SKILLS FOR LEARNING, LIFE AND WORK' ANGUS PILOT

3.1 In order to promote a shared understanding and language around skills for learning, life and work, a common Angus set of skills has been defined. These draw directly on guidance within **Building the Curriculum 4** and are intentionally high in level and few in number.

3.2 Staff and pupils already use a rich skills vocabulary often related to particular curricular areas or subjects. The intention is not to replace this vocabulary but rather to offer a means by which a consistent connection is made for all learners between the skills in subject-specific contexts and the overarching set of skills that they will acquire gradually and apply in life beyond school.

3.3 ***Skills for Learning, Life and Work in Angus*** describes three overlapping and mutually complementary 'clusters' of skills.

1 Skills for Learning

Based on Anderson's version of Bloom's Taxonomy (2000) of higher order thinking skills:
remembering; understanding; applying; analysing; evaluating; creating

2 Skills for Life

The cross-cutting themes of Curriculum for Excellence that are the responsibility of all:
Literacy; Numeracy; Health & Wellbeing; Enterprise

3 Skills for Work

The ten 'softer' employability skills identified in the Scottish Government's lifelong skills strategy:

Managing time; planning and organising; communicating (oral and written); solving problems; undertaking tasks at short notice; working with others; thinking critically and creatively; learning and continuing to learn; taking responsibility for own development; managing and being managed by others

- 3.4 There is no presumption or intention that this approach be perceived as the only way in which skills for learning life and work are or could be described. However, this descriptive framework will enable staff, pupils and partners to achieve a shared understanding of the range of skills which the new curriculum is being designed to nurture. The framework has understandably been a key focus for a local pilot exercise which has attracted considerable interest from other authorities and from national agencies.

4 KEY FOCUS AND OUTCOMES OF THE PILOT TO DATE

- 4.1 The pilot project involved 22 Angus schools (Appendix 1). The pilot involved in the main three key training/networking events in the period August 2010 – February 2011, delivered by EDS staff at school and cluster level.

- 4.2 The purpose of the training was to:

- establish and agree a shared understanding of skills for learning, life and work and a related vocabulary
- connect with current practice and explore opportunities by which existing planning and profiling procedures could be adapted to incorporate skills progression
- allow staff and learners to articulate which skills are being developed, how they are being progressed and recognise when and where they can be transferred
- provide feedback on the draft guidance document and related resources.

- 4.3 The draft Angus Skills set has been shared with local employers including Glaxo Smith Kline and Angus College and feedback sought. In order to highlight links between skills development and new national assessment procedures the poster and resources within the set have been used at secondary Subject Network and Curriculum Advisory Group meetings and at primary school moderation meetings.

- 4.4 The main outcomes of what, overall, has been a successful pilot exercise are as follows:

- feedback from the participating schools has informed the development of a final version of the Angus guidance document on Skills for Learning, Life and Work
- 22 schools engaged successfully in piloting approaches to planning, assessing and profiling skills progression
- high quality school/cluster continuing professional development activities have been provided to 'early adopting' schools
- a Skills for Learning, Life and Work Glow Group has been established
- Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and colleagues from other Local Authorities have either attended the pilot learning events or requested copies of the Angus guidance and resources for national distribution
- there have been presentations of materials to the Scottish Enterprise in Education Network and the Enterprising Practitioners' Network
- positive feedback has been received (Appendix 2) from pilot schools
- LTS has filmed good practice identified through the skills pilot in Carnoustie High School and in Maisondieu Primary School, Brechin. (These short films will now feature in the 'best practice' area of the LTS website.)

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Arrangements are now being made to build on the success of the skills pilot through the following steps:

- we will issue final guidance to all schools to support the implementation of 'Building the Curriculum 4'

- the Angus Effective Learning and Teaching Conference in June 2011 will provide the launch event for the Angus guidance and resources
- meetings will be arranged to share practice with colleagues from other interested authorities (Argyll and Bute, Renfrewshire, Moray, Perth and Kinross, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Highland and Aberdeenshire)
- we will provide information for parents and partners
- we will incorporate planning and profiling approaches within the new electronic planning and tracking tool, 'On Track With Learning', which is being jointly developed by Angus Council and North Lanarkshire Council.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising directly from this report.

8 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An [equalities impact assessment](#) is not required.

9 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

9.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Single Outcome Agreement:

Young people and adults in Angus maximise their potential through learning opportunities (National Outcome 3)

Children and young people in Angus will have access to positive learning environments and opportunities to develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem to the fullest potential (National Outcome 4)

10 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report

**NEIL LOGUE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

E/NL

PILOT SCHOOLS**PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Arbroath West Cluster - | Arbirlot/Carmyllie PS Inverbrothock PS Muirfield PS |
| Brechin Cluster - | Andover PS Edzell/Stracathro PS Lethnot/Tarfside PS Maisondieu PS |
| Carnoustie Cluster - | Monikie PS Newbigging PS Woodlands PS |
| Monifieth Cluster - | Seaview PS |
| Montrose Cluster - | Borrowfield PS Ferryden PS Lochside PS Rosemount PS St Margaret's PS Southesk |

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Carnoustie High School
Forfar Academy

STAFF FEEDBACK FROM ANGUS SKILLS PILOT

“It has shown us that skills are an integral part of teaching and learning – almost a by-product of what we are doing and certainly not an add-on. The Experiences and Outcomes provide a good vehicle to develop the skills and to achieve these outcomes we need to provide a variety of contexts for developing skills.”

“As a result of our forward thinking working group and CPD/EDS support staff, teachers are making good progress towards embedding skills development and understanding as part of their daily practices.”

“The pupils are much more skills aware (even in this short space of time) and know that they focus on lots of different skills every day and are becoming more able to identify them within tasks.”

“Being involved in the pilot has helped to develop a greater understanding of what we mean by skills for learning, life and work. In particular the links between what we teach in the classroom and what the pupils learn. Regular sharing practice sessions in our school group have allowed collaborative working to develop in this area. Through these discussions, we all realised the importance of teaching skills explicitly. This was definitely our light bulb moment! Our main focus has been skills for learning. Our planning has changed. We are highlighting what skills we are developing and ensuring a range of skills are being developed, particularly the higher order skills.”

“Skills profiles to become an integral part of pupil profile of strengths and achievements (to include the four contexts).”

“Pilot shared with parents during a curriculum evening prior to starting –sharing the standard and expectations with parents resulted in positive outcomes.”

“Have been trying to develop higher order skills for years and this pilot has been a catalyst for us.”

“The skills work has probably had the biggest impact on practice and learning that the school has been involved in.”