

ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
2 JUNE 2011
CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE: PROGRESS UPDATE
REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to provide the Education Committee with a progress update in relation to the implementation of the new curriculum.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (i) note the terms of this report
- (ii) note the continuing arrangements to provide comprehensive support to Angus schools in implementing Curriculum for Excellence
- (iii) note that, while there remain challenges associated with any major reform of the school curriculum, Angus schools are overall very well placed to meet these challenges

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 3 June 2010, the Education Committee considered report 422/10 which provided a progress report in relation to the work of the education service to support the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in Angus schools in August 2010.
- 2.2 That report offered detailed information about the nature and range of Angus responses to the national reform, in particular, the preparation and issue to schools of high quality learning and teaching resources, the provision of detailed advice and guidance to staff and the range of continuing professional development programmes put in place in response to staff training needs and the education service's agreed improvement priorities.
- 2.3 As members will be aware, 'Curriculum for Excellence' is fundamentally about improving how rather than what pupils learn. This major reform expects all teachers to become confident in delivering a curriculum which develops transferable skills for learning, life and work. This approach requires teachers to be confident in accepting that the role of a 21st century teacher in Scotland goes beyond teaching discrete specialist subjects. All teachers, primary and secondary, now have responsibility for promoting and supporting pupils to develop skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers also have responsibility to provide personal support and challenge that will help pupils achieve to the highest level they can.
- 2.4 Scottish Government proceeded with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in August 2010 and is committed to the proposed timetable to introduce, in 2014, the first diet of new national qualifications.
- 2.5 The 10 point plan for the new curriculum, announced by the Cabinet Secretary at the end of March 2010, made provision for a more direct supporting role for HMIE. In performing that role, HMIE have identified seven key characteristics for the effective implementation of the new curriculum. The following sections of this report summarise, *using as headings these seven HMIE characteristics*, the comprehensive programme of support provided to Angus schools and what I consider to be the commendable progress made to date.

3. 'A CLEAR PLAN BASED ON SELF-EVALUATION'

- 3.1 The education service has a well established 4 year Angus 'Curriculum for Excellence' implementation timeline. In turn, Quality Improvement Officers and other members of the Educational Development Service have worked closely with individual schools to assist them to develop clear and coherent school plans based on current strengths, improvement priorities and related support needs. Pleasingly, the key milestones, set within the Angus timeline, have been met consistently.
- 3.3 To complement the timeline and provide further guidance, specific actions for development and improvement have been framed in discrete Angus Council responses to notable national documents. While these responses are addressed in greater detail through the body of this report, to summarise, they include:
- *Repacked Experiences and Outcomes* (September 2009) in response to 'Building the Curriculum 1' (2006) and the subsequent publication of 'Experiences and Outcomes' for all Curriculum Areas (2008)
 - *Active Learning 3-15* (January 2008) and *Linking the Learning* (September 2008) in response to Building the Curriculum 2 (2007)
 - *Angus Curriculum Review and Design Guidelines* (October 2010) in response to Building the Curriculum 3 (2008)
 - *Skills for Learning, Life and Work in Angus* (June 2010) in response to Building the Curriculum 4 (2009)
 - *Ensuring Quality and Confidence in Assessment in Angus* (August 2010) in response to Building the Curriculum 5 (2010)
- 3.4 Arrangements have been made to gather evidence on progress with the new curriculum in a range of ways including through twice yearly evaluative 'Progress, Impact, Next steps' (PIN) reports, prepared by Head Teachers in all schools. In turn, Quality Improvement Officers validate the statements and evidence in the PIN reports through direct observation of children's learning, meetings with staff and pupil focus groups, evaluations of professional development activities, and detailed scrutiny of schools' annual self-evaluation reports and annual standards and quality reports.

4. 'GOOD QUALITY SUPPORT FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT'

- 4.1 The education service has made significant investment in bringing about a change in how children learn and in promoting their active engagement as learners. The documents, *Active Learning 3-15* (January 2008) and *Linking the Learning* (September 2008), highlighted above, were further supported through workshops at a subsequent major training event in February 2009.
- 4.2 Co-operative Learning training has been rolled out across Angus. Almost all teaching and many support staff have undertaken the training as well as probationer teachers, selected partners and staff from neighbouring authorities. The initial training has been complemented by recall events, by access to learning resources and by regular networking. The very positive impacts of co-operative learning on children's learning were highlighted in the report '*The Impact of Cooperative Learning on Pupils, Staff and Parents*' (January 2011) and based on an extensive authority wide review. That report was the subject of a report considered by the Education Committee on 3 March 2011 (Article 8 refers).
- 4.3 There has been well considered use of in-service days to deliver key messages and articles about the new curriculum to all Angus teaching staff, for example, 'Active Learning' in February 2009, Assessment in May 2010 and 'Assessment, Moderation and Reporting' in November 2010.

- 4.4 Guidance about ensuring valid and reliable approaches to assessment and moderation has been provided through the publication of *Ensuring Quality and Confidence in Assessment in Angus* (August 2010). This resource has been supported by further resources and support materials shared with schools through CPD activities at school and cluster level. At the request of Learning and Teaching Scotland, this approach to supporting schools was the subject of a presentation which received a very positive response at a national Curriculum for Excellence assessment event in March 2011. At this early stage, Angus schools and clusters are making good progress in developing their understanding of the new assessment approaches and establishing shared standards in measuring pupil progress and achievement.
- 4.5 Detailed guidance on the systematic planning and development of skills for learning, life and work for all learners contained in *Skills for Learning, Life and Work in Angus* (June 2010) has been piloted in 22 schools. This pilot has been accompanied by well received training to support teachers to deliver the entitlement of all learners to acquire transferable, lifelong skills. The pilot project has also generated further resources and examples of effective practice likely to be of benefit to all schools in Angus. This work has been recognised by and shared with a number of other local authorities. It has been recognised nationally, and has been highlighted as an example of effective practice on the Learning and Teaching Scotland website.
- 4.6 Since 2008/09, secondary schools have been encouraged to enhance and support the use of active learning methodologies by establishing an 'active learning community'. This work has been supported in part by the engagement of some schools in a Tapestry 'Teacher Learning Community' project. Related commitments are increasingly assisting teachers to reflect together about and strengthen their classroom practice.
- 5. 'TEACHERS ARE WORKING WITH INCREASING CONFIDENCE WITH THE 'EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES' IN TAKING A COHERENT APPROACH TO LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT'**
- 5.1 The production of up to date *Angus Curriculum Review and Design Guidelines* (October 2010) has been the subject of widespread consultation and discussion. Currently in draft form, this document already supports and steers schools in carrying out curriculum development work, while allowing an appropriate degree of local autonomy that reflects the spirit of the new curriculum.
- 5.2 The Angus education service has invested significantly in 'repacking' the national 'experiences and outcomes' documents for non-curriculum areas and levels and, uniquely among Scottish authorities, has produced a comprehensive set of *Repacked Experiences and Outcomes* (September 2009). This major resource has been extremely well received by schools and is a significant factor in almost all learning across the curriculum in 2010/11, from pre-school to S1, being planned around the new national experiences and outcomes.
- 5.3 In turn, this development work has been incorporated within an electronic planning/ tracking and reporting tool, 'On Track With Learning' (OTWL), developed in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council. This tool will be the subject of a phased roll out to all Angus schools from August 2011. It will also be incorporated into SEEMIS (the management information system now used in 28 of the 32 Scottish Authorities).
- 5.4 The significance and impact of this work is perhaps most easily revealed by highlighting that seven other local authorities have already purchased the Angus '*Repacked Experiences and Outcomes*', thereby generating funds in excess of £35,000. It is anticipated that this income source will develop once OTWL is fully operational in SEEMIS and hence more widely available.

- 5.5 There is ongoing support to schools to ensure a consistent understanding and application of standards of attainment. The guidance document, *Ensuring Quality and Confidence in Assessment in Angus* (August 2010) and related training are increasing teacher confidence in reliably assessing learning and achievement in a manageable way. The guidance document clearly describes mechanisms for moderation at school, cluster and authority level. All clusters have already held or will hold at least three cluster moderation events by June 2011. They have established sustainable models for managing such events in future sessions.
- 5.6 From May 2011, all Angus schools are reporting to parents in a format that uses the structures and languages of the new curriculum.
- 5.7 There is evidence of sound interdisciplinary learning in all secondary schools. Guidance about effective planning and management of learning across curriculum areas is provided in the *Angus Curriculum Review and Design Guidelines*. School self-evaluation procedures suggest that pupils enjoy this approach to learning and feel that it places subject work in a clearer context in ways which make it more relevant and meaningful.
- 6. 'EFFECTIVE ARRANGEMENTS TO ASSESS AND TRACK PROGRESS'**
- 6.1 There is increasing use and, more significantly, better understanding of assessment as a tool for learning. This is a direct consequence of changes in how learning takes place and the growth in the active involvement of young people in their learning. As a result, learners are clearer about planned learning, have greater ownership and responsibility in evaluating their own progress and that of their peers against meaningful success criteria and are better able to articulate next steps in their learning.
- 6.2 Interim Angus guidance is helping schools to plan learning and reliably track coverage of the experiences and outcomes that shape the new curriculum. That guidance has been well received by schools and almost all Angus primary pupils maintain some form of personal learning log that is shared with parents.
- 6.3 There are very good arrangements in place in all school clusters to support transitions - particularly with regard to personal support. The deployment of a cluster Transition Teacher, based in each secondary school, strongly supports transition from P7 to S1.
- 7. 'STRONG AND SECURE ACHIEVEMENT IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY'**
- 7.1 The *Angus Literacy Strategy Paper* (June 2010) and *Numeracy Strategy Paper* (April 2010) provide clear guidance, recommendations and action points for schools and the authority over the next three years. These documents received very favourable comment from HMIE during autumn 2010 partnership events in Angus.
- 7.2 All schools have undertaken literacy and numeracy audits to inform local action plans in response to the Angus strategy papers. All clusters have the management of continuity and progression in literacy and numeracy integrated as an explicit focus within transition arrangements
- 7.3 Literacy and Numeracy training has met with favourable evaluations and is strengthening practice in schools. The training of local trainers has allowed the development of a sustainable model to deliver the internationally regarded *'First Steps in Number'* training to all Angus schools. Two clusters have received training in 2010/11, with other clusters scheduled to be involved from 2011/12 onwards. This highly regarded initiative spans primary and secondary schools.
- 7.4 'Moving Image Education' will be rolled-out to the two remaining clusters in 2011/12. 'Reading School' Awards which support schools in evaluating and moving forward their practice has been launched and well received. Schools accredited to date report that it provides a focus for identifying development needs. The development of the *Information Keys* resource effectively links with skills for learning, life and work, particularly, the higher order thinking skills and is a useful tool for schools to focus on critical and information literacy.

8. 'EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS, INCLUDING WITH PARENTS'

- 8.1 There is direct engagement between the education directorate, Quality Improvement Officers and Parent Council representatives including through twice annual meetings. Ongoing regular contact is being facilitated through the recently developed Parent Council blog.
- 8.2 The Educational Development Service has produced of a series of leaflets for schools to customise and issue to parents to help inform them about changes occurring through the introduction of the new curriculum. These information leaflets include aspects such as: Assessment and Reporting; Literacy; Numeracy; Skills for learning, life and work; 16+ Learning Choices; Interdisciplinary Learning and Active Learning.
- 8.3 There are highly successful partnerships with local further and higher education institutions. Capacity within the Angus schools-Angus College partnership has increased by over 300% since 2005/06. In excess of 600 young people in S3 and S4 (approximately one in five of the cohort) now participate in accredited learning through the partnership as a timetabled part of their school curriculum. There is also significant uptake in S5/6 of Higher Psychology and plans are being made to pilot the use of HNC modules for identified senior school pupils. The recent establishment of a service level agreement with the local Murton Wildlife Trust continues to broaden the curriculum for secondary pupils. All of these partnerships provide greater personalisation and choice which is one of the design principles for the new curriculum, particularly where learning beyond school can be accredited as an integral part of the senior phase (S4-S6) of the new curriculum.
- 8.4 There is increasingly effective joint working across support services within the Education Department and with other council services. Angus was an early adopter of 16+ Learning Choices, seen by Scottish Government as fundamental to the senior phase of the new curriculum. We continue to be proactive in seeking to ensure that the right choices and right chances are available at the right time to help Angus young people, particularly those at greater risk, to enter and sustain positive destinations on leaving school. This work has involved establishing and building close partnerships with Skills Development Scotland, the Community Learning and Development Service, Social Work and Youth Justice. Key training in support of the GIRFEC approach is to be rolled out to all schools and relevant education department staff in May and June 2011.
- 8.5 There are extensive, long standing and well used formal and informal partnerships with local employers. These partnerships are invaluable in establishing the relevance of learning in school through its application in real-life contexts. Although too numerous to detail, such partnerships with employers include provision of in excess of 1200 work experience placements annually, enterprise activities, work related learning and the 'number partners' project. This employer engagement is celebrated through a highly regarded annual recognition event drawing representatives from more than 100 local employers.

9. 'GOOD LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS'

- 9.1 The senior management team of the service has provided a clear strategic vision to support schools to engage positively and confidently with the new curriculum. There have been regular meetings with Head Teachers often involving workshops to enhance the leadership capacity of school management teams in response to the challenges of the new curriculum.
- 9.2 Moreover, the Educational Development Service has provided a range of well considered support and advice to Head Teachers and school staff in their continuing efforts to introduce the new curriculum. There are a wide range of networking opportunities and standing groups that allow authority senior managers and other centrally based staff to meet regularly with school staff to exchange ideas, clarify and influence thinking and develop ownership of the change and improvement priorities associated with the new curriculum. These forums also facilitate meaningful and open consultation in influencing the development of authority policy and guidance.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 Angus schools have responded well to the training, resources, networking opportunities and practical advice, provided by the education authority in preparing for the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence. The development of resources, advice and guidance, summarised in the foregoing sections of this report has, in no small measure, been the result of a mutually supportive partnership between school staff and staff in the Educational Development Service. This has allowed the professional support needs of Angus teachers to be met to an extent that is not currently apparent in all local authority areas in introducing this welcome reform of the Scottish school curriculum.

10.2 While there are continuing challenges to be addressed, Angus schools are well placed to meet those challenges and deliver the ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence. Equally, the authority, working closely, where necessary, with other authorities and with key national agencies, is well placed to respond to the support needs of our schools and staff.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

12. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

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

13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An [equalities impact assessment](#) has been undertaken.

14. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

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)
- Children and young people in Angus will be involved in decisions that affect them, have their voices heard and be encouraged to play an active and responsible role in their communities (National Outcome 11)

15. 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

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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.

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