



# Effective Learning & Teaching in Fife Schools

In publishing *Effective Learning & Teaching in Fife Schools*, we acknowledge the many valuable contributions and comments made by members of the Education Service.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to give direction to all partners involved in learning and teaching in Fife. It is anticipated that this guidance will inform school policy and contribute to the professional development of teachers. It replaces the *Policy on Teaching and Learning 1994*. It takes into account *Assessment is for Learning*, *The Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)*, *Education for Excellence (2003)*, *A Curriculum for Excellence (2004)* and other significant developments in Scottish education.



*“The curriculum reflects what we value as a nation and what we seek for our young people. It is designed to convey knowledge which is considered to be important and to promote the development of values, understanding and capabilities. It is concerned both with what is to be learned and how it is taught. It should enable all of the young people of Scotland to flourish as individuals, reach high levels of achievement, and make valuable contributions to society. The curriculum affects us all.”*

**‘A Curriculum for Excellence’  
 The Curriculum Review Group**

## CONTEXT for LEARNING & TEACHING

### Context for Change

There are significant new influences and challenges facing young people today.

These arise from :

- ◆ social, political and economic change
- ◆ the growing diversity of our society
- ◆ better understanding of the ways in which children and young people learn
- ◆ new technologies
- ◆ the potential of partnerships.

In order to prepare our children and young people to meet these challenges we must look differently at the way we educate them to :

- ◆ understand the world they are living in
- ◆ reach the highest possible level of achievement
- ◆ equip them for work and learning throughout their lives
- ◆ engage positively with learning which is well matched to individual need.

## Education Service

### AIMS

Fife Council is committed to equality of education for all children and young people in Fife. All children and young people have an enormous capacity for learning and potential to achieve. Our schools, and all those engaged in the education partnership, are encouraged to provide meaningful learning opportunities in rich environments which support the development of young people as lifelong learners who are able to become :

- ◆ successful learners
- ◆ confident individuals
- ◆ responsible citizens
- ◆ effective contributors to society and work.

### Priorities

Fife Education Service has adopted the aim of providing “Excellence for All” described by six key priorities.

- ◆ Raising attainment
- ◆ Promoting achievement and inclusion
- ◆ Developing our staff
- ◆ Focusing on customers
- ◆ Providing high quality schools
- ◆ Building partnerships



*Excellence for All*

## Successful Schools

### ETHOS & THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Research evidence supports the view that the ethos of a school and the learning environment bear directly on pupils' achievements and attainment. A successful school approach will take into consideration a number of significant factors which are :

- ◆ high expectations by all staff regarding effective learning and teaching
- ◆ a strong collaborative partnership of staff, pupils and parents
- ◆ an emphasis on finding individuals' strengths and building on them in order to raise and nurture self-esteem
- ◆ a continuing commitment to the provision and maintenance of stimulating, well resourced learning environments.

### INCLUSION & EQUALITY

All pupils, whatever their culture or language, should be considered as active learners. There should be no barrier to participation on the grounds of any of the following :

- ◆ disability
- ◆ gender
- ◆ race
- ◆ religion
- ◆ sexual orientation.

Positive steps should be taken to ensure that pupils, parents and staff are treated equally, with respect and in a fair and just manner.

*Excellence for All*

## The Curriculum: 3-18

Fife Council endorses the view that the purpose of the curriculum is to provide structure, support and direction, which will enable children and young people to develop in the four capacities, which are described in 'A Curriculum for Excellence'.



Schools are required to take these aspirations and the National Priorities (Appendix 1) into account in the design and implementation of the curriculum. They should also recognise the important influence of families and communities.

## LEARNING & TEACHING

### Principles for Design and Implementation

#### Vision

##### *Learners learn best when they*

- ◆ *understand clearly what they are trying to learn, and what is expected of them.*
- ◆ *are fully involved in deciding what needs to be done next, and who can give them help if they need it.*
- ◆ *are given feedback about the quality of their work, and what they can do to make it better.*
- ◆ *are given advice about how to go about making improvements*

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#### How do we create successful learners?

In order to ensure the opportunity for young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors we must :

- ◆ provide the best environment for learning
- ◆ ensure choice of teaching and learning approaches
- ◆ adapt the way in which learning is organised to suit the intended learner
- ◆ support the social, emotional, physical and cultural needs of the individual.

#### How do we create an appropriate learning environment?

Learners learn most effectively when they feel safe, secure and have a sense of belonging and being valued. This happens when :

- ◆ we foster mutual respect, responsibility and tolerance among children and young people, staff and parent/carers
- ◆ all partners have high expectations of individuals and believe that each young person can succeed
- ◆ we develop confidence and ambition in each young person
- ◆ we recognise and celebrate success
- ◆ we develop individual self efficacy and self-esteem.

- ◆ we create an appropriately stimulating and challenging curriculum
- ◆ we provide a physical learning environment well matched to the needs of young people
- ◆ we value what children and young people bring to the learning environment
- ◆ we nurture the expectation of life long learning
- ◆ we promote literacy, numeracy, communication, creativity, enterprise, problem solving, critical thinking, technological expertise and the pursuit of a healthy, active lifestyle.

### **How do we create effective interaction?**

Staff should employ a range of methods and provide opportunities to encourage pupil dialogue, collaboration, contribution and participation. This should comprise pupils working in a variety of ways with other learners, a range of staff and parents. It is the responsibility of the teacher to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and listening which is central to best classroom practice. This involves both staff and learner in reflection, review and decision making.

### **How do we plan for successful learning?**

Focused planning makes learning and teaching manageable and is central to effective learning. Teachers have a responsibility to co-ordinate methods to assess, record and plan for pupil needs. It is important that planning takes account of prior learning and next steps while emphasising progress, pace and challenge. Identification and use of resources and teaching strategies should match the needs and abilities of the individual learner.

There needs to be sufficient flexibility in planning for learning so that the right blend and balance is achieved for each learner, suiting their particular stage, circumstance and learning style. This will require adaptation as the learner progresses and, for this reason, should be regularly reviewed. Providing continuity, progression and challenge will ensure learners are learning at a suitable pace.

The process of personal learning planning should be at the core of the educational experience for all learners. Learning targets are influenced by different aspects of learning and teaching, including prior learning and experience, as well as curricular guidance. These are reached through coherent, achievable learning steps. This could mean having various pathways towards next steps in learning. The steps are assessed and reviewed through self, peer and teacher assessment along with parental/carer input. The collected evidence should be reviewed and fed back to support the creation of a new learning target which identifies the next step in learning.

### **How can we facilitate successful learning?**

Young people learn in many different ways and have varying needs which must be met. Teachers must have knowledge of, and take into account, individual learning styles. This requires the use of strategies. Provision must be made for learners to have the opportunity to encounter a broad range of experiences across a wide range of contexts.

Teachers and young people should be aware of the purpose of learning (why), the methodology of learning (how) and the content of learning (what), in order to promote a commitment to

learning outcomes. Learners should be challenged, engaged and motivated. They should be active in their learning and given opportunities to develop and demonstrate creativity. Through these processes, pupils will begin to understand themselves as learners.

Through the development of thinking skills, learners will be able to deepen thinking and achieve advanced levels of understanding.

Successful learners are confident about their abilities and are able to move forward as independent learners.

### **What is effective teaching?**

It is crucial that teachers and support staff are confident in the use of a range of teaching and learning strategies which equip them to respond positively to the challenges presented in the classroom.

Central to effective teaching should be :

- ◆ sharing learning intentions
- ◆ creating success criteria with learners
- ◆ using effective questioning to extend thinking
- ◆ giving clear and specific advice to learners about how to improve
- ◆ creating a positive climate in classrooms
- ◆ empowering learners to work collaboratively
- ◆ allowing learners to take responsibility for learning
- ◆ ensuring continuity and progression in learning
- ◆ reviewing learning for recall and retention.

Effective differentiation is also important for effective teaching. This takes account of the varying ability, as well as achievement and attainment levels, within a class and ensures appropriate pace and challenge for all pupils.

Ongoing dialogue between teacher and learner informs learners of their strengths, development needs and next steps. This dialogue is central to effective teaching and learning. Teachers must also use this process to inform their assessment of attained learning.

When teaching is effective it will lead to: remediation, appropriate challenge and pace, the ongoing development of meaningful and effective courses and a teaching methodology that can be adapted to suit the needs of individual learners.

### **How can we make the most of assessment?**

Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence through dialogue, learner achievement and attainment, in order to realise potential. Assessment evidence should be used by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. Assessment methods should take account of different abilities, languages and cultures without discriminating unfairly against any individual or

group. Formative assessment through interactive teaching and learning, effectively combined with summative assessment, will provide a comprehensive profile of learner achievement, attainment and potential.

Staff should encourage learners' capacities for self-assessment so that they can become reflective and self-managing. This process starts with the development of the necessary skills for peer assessment.

Teachers should be aware of the effect of comments, marks and grades on the confidence and enthusiasm of learners. Staff should be as sensitive and constructive as possible in the feedback they give, because any assessment has an emotional impact.

It should be noted that giving marks and grades has little impact on improving learning. Comments which give feedback on the quality of the work, as well as the next steps in learning, are more constructive in creating progression in learning and increasing motivation.

### **How do we know how we are doing?**

Learners should be encouraged to provide feedback on their experience of learning at an individual level. This can be facilitated through the use of personal learning planning which focuses on learning and where there is provision for feedback.

### **Educational Partnerships**

Educational partnerships are fundamental to the success of learners.

Young people spend only a small part of their lives in formal education. It must be recognised and acknowledged that parents/carers are the principle educators of children and young people. Parental involvement with their children's learning is a key element in achieving success. There must be mutual understanding and respect, a continuing dialogue and a sharing of expertise and information between pupils, parents and teachers. At the heart of this process is personal learning planning.

Pupil/parent/school relationships must be nurtured and developed. The process of personal learning planning has the potential to enhance understanding of school expectations and curricula. This process allows young people and their parents to make a valuable contribution to learning.

Outside agencies have their place within educational partnerships and can effectively support young people and families as necessary. In Fife, there is a range of voluntary and statutory services which work to support families and schools. Where these services are involved, an integrated approach is most effective.

### **Choice and Opportunity**

Appropriate pace and challenge will provide scope to encourage learners to reach their own potential by progressing at a challenging rate. There must be recognition of achievement which is valued by the wider community. The learning environment which is created should provide opportunities for learners to progress, where appropriate, at an accelerated rate. This will allow the achievement of milestones more quickly and give flexibility of timing for attaining higher qualifications.

The development of formal partnership arrangements with colleges will provide learners with appropriate arrangements for their learning needs. As young people move through their educational experience, the partnerships between schools and colleges can effectively extend and enhance the provision offered by schools.

### **Curriculum Flexibility**

A curriculum that is well matched to a young person's abilities and interests will maximise engagement and minimise disaffection. This is the key to improving behaviour and reducing disruption in educational establishments.

Curricular expectations are set out in 'A Curriculum for Excellence'.

#### *The curriculum should :*

- ◆ *make learning active, challenging and enjoyable*
- ◆ *not be too fragmented or over-crowded with content*
- ◆ *connect the various stages of learning from 3 to 18*
- ◆ *encourage the development of high levels of accomplishment and intellectual skill*
- ◆ *include a wide range of experiences and achieve a suitable blend of what has traditionally been seen as 'academic' and 'vocational'*
- ◆ *give opportunities for children to make appropriate choices to meet their individual interests and needs, while ensuring that these choices lead to success*
- ◆ *ensure that assessment supports learning*

**'A Curriculum for Excellence – The Curriculum Review Group' Pg 10**

The curriculum which we design for our young people in Fife should:

- ◆ continue to prioritise literacy and numeracy for young people in order to ensure that they leave compulsory education adequately prepared for future life
- ◆ ensure that the structure and balance of the school curriculum meets the needs of the pupil population
- ◆ retain core skills as central to the curriculum – problem solving, working with others, communication, numeracy and IT across the curriculum
- ◆ build explicitly into programmes of study – chances for enterprise, creativity, life skills and citizenship

- ◆ consider block teaching for some subjects so that fewer subjects have to be included in weekly timetables
- ◆ make explicit curricular links, in order to make the curriculum contextual and therefore more coherent to pupils.

*The learning will take place through a wide range of planned experiences. These will include environmental, scientific, technological, historical, social, economic, political, mathematical and linguistic contexts, the arts, culture and sports. Sometimes the experiences may be linked to particular vocational or other specialised contexts. To achieve this breadth will require both subject-based studies and activities which span several disciplines.*

***'A Curriculum for Excellence – The Curriculum Review Group' Pg 13***

### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

Initial teacher training and improved probationary experiences give new teachers a clear understanding of the expectations of the processes of good learning and teaching based on the Standard for Full Registration. These processes should form the basis of best practice as it is expected from all teaching staff.

As research develops our understanding of how children and young people learn best, there is an ongoing need to support and develop teaching staff in the improvement of learning and teaching processes.

An understanding of what, why and how we teach in order to support excellence for individuals should be clear in the minds of all teachers. Teachers should facilitate the best learning experiences possible for all learners in their care.

Teachers will, through the review and development process, highlight areas within learning and teaching which they will be able to address through individual or collegiate CPD, as well as action research.

The CPD team in Fife supports teacher development in learning and teaching through a range of experiences detailed in 'The Fife Framework for Continuous Professional Development: Pathway 2'.

These include :

- ◆ Learning and Teaching courses
- ◆ Bibliographical support
- ◆ The CPD website
- ◆ Chartered Teacher Networks.

As well as this, co-operative teaching and planning, shadowing and other types of peer support have proved to be very beneficial CPD experiences.

### **Quality Assurance**

It is the collective responsibility of all partners to implement this policy on learning and teaching. Education Service management will provide support and will challenge and monitor the quality of learning and teaching in educational establishments.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching is embedded within the quality assurance process. School management teams should facilitate CPD opportunities as appropriate. Partners should be encouraged to reflect on information gathered in order to inform next steps in school or individual development.

Each school should be able to provide evidence that learning and teaching practice is consistent with this policy and that the council commitment to learning and teaching is being met.

*April 2006*

*This policy will be reviewed, when and where appropriate, in the light of new local and national developments.*

## **APPENDIX I**

# **National Priorities in Education**

Following consultation, an order was agreed by the Scottish Parliament in December 2000 defining the national priorities for education in Scotland as follows:

### **National Priority 1 - Achievement and Attainment**

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

### **National Priorities 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.

### **National Priorities 3 - Inclusion and Equality**

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

### **National Priorities 4 - Values and Citizenship**

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

### **National Priorities 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.

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اگر آپ ان پمفلٹ کے بارے میں مزید جاننا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم  
ڈیویڈ واٹسن سے رابطہ کریں اور اس کے بارے میں مزید جاننا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم

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