



# **Lanark Grammar School**



**Curriculum for Excellence  
Update  
June 2011**

Our S1 Curriculum for Excellence Parents' Information Evening held on Wednesday 30 March 2011 was very well attended and, in addition to key information being conveyed to parents, provided an opportunity for parents and the Head Teacher to engage in a very worthwhile question and answer session which focused on the key areas of interest and concern for parents.

This booklet summarises the key points raised on the evening; outlines our next steps in the process of implementation of Curriculum for Excellence; and highlights the work which is currently ongoing in developing the National Qualification Framework of certificate courses which will be implemented by the Scottish Qualifications Authority in a phased manner from session 2013-2014.

The first part of the presentation revisited the key elements of Curriculum for Excellence. This information can be found in our Curriculum for Excellence Parents' Booklets which have been issued previously to parents and are available on our website or from our School Office on request.

The key purpose of the curriculum is to develop in our pupils the following Four Capacities:

- Successful Learners;
- Confident Individuals;
- Responsible Citizens; and
- Effective Contributors

In order to do so our teachers have been reviewing both what we teach and how we teach it to ensure our pupils' learning experiences create the context for the development of the Four Capacities.

Our teachers have also been ensuring that pupils' learning experiences ensure coverage of the Experiences and Outcomes which are the fundamental building blocks of learning in each of the Eight Curricular Areas. Experiences set expectations for the kinds of activities which will promote learning and development while Outcomes set out what our pupils will be able to explain, apply or demonstrate.

The Eight Curricular Areas are:

- Expressive Arts
- Health & Wellbeing
- Languages
- Mathematics
- Religious and Moral Education
- Sciences
- Social Studies
- Technologies

Similar work has also been taking place in aspects of the curriculum which are considered to be a 'responsibility for all' staff. These are:

- Literacy across learning;
- Numeracy across learning; and
- Health & Wellbeing across learning

The above areas are led, respectively, by Ms Brooks, Principal Teacher of English and Communication; Ms Sturgeon, Principal Teacher Mathematical Applications; and Ms Clarence, Principal Teacher Health & Wellbeing. All three members of staff have been working with colleagues within school to take forward these areas of Curriculum for Excellence through carrying out audits and identifying aspects of good practice.

In addition, Ms Sturgeon and Ms Brooks have been engaging with colleagues from our associated Primary Schools about key aspects of learning and assessment. Similar work is being carried out by Ms Clingan in the area of Modern Foreign Languages. Next session, this ongoing work will be enhanced by greater liaison with our Primary colleagues about pupils' learning experiences in Sciences.

During the latter stages of their Primary School experience, the majority of pupils will have attained at Level 2 and, in secondary school, move on to undertake work at Level 3 which will continue through S1-S3. This part of a pupil's secondary school experience is known as the Broad General Education. The majority of pupils will attain Level 3 by the end of S3 but this may be earlier for some. Some pupils may move on to undertake work at Level 4 during S3, or earlier for some. Level 4 is equivalent to Standard Grade General/Intermediate 1 awards.

The period from S4-S6 is known as the Senior Phase. This is the period when pupils will begin to undertake SQA certificate examinations.

### **Choosing at S1**

Personalisation and choice is a key design principle of Curriculum for Excellence. With this in mind we set out to engage with our pupils, parents and staff to consider whether an element of choosing at the end of S1 would be seen as a positive aspect of our implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

The outcomes were as follows.

Pupils told us they:

- liked the idea of having choice at the end of S1;
- liked the idea of having choice within subject areas (Curricular Areas);
- wanted to know what was to be studied in S2 prior to choosing; and
- wanted to spend time talking to their parents prior to making choices.

Parents told us they:

- were more reticent about choice than pupils;
- felt pupils knew what to choose in some subject areas but less so in others;
- wanted clear information on what was to be studied in S2;
- wanted more information on the development of National Qualifications; and
- they wanted more information on the Senior Phase.

Staff told us:

- some of our proposals were too radical;
- it is important to remember that pupils have had experience of subject areas from Primary School;
- we require to be precise about potential Certificate routes following choosing;
- and

individual pupils have individual strengths - when it comes to making choices we must ensure we provide appropriate individual support where this is required.

Following this feedback the following opportunities for choosing at the end of S1 were put in place.

**Expressive Arts:** pupils chose to continue with 2 subjects from 3 (Art, Drama or Music) for 2x2 periods per week.

**Foreign Languages:** pupils study core language for 2 periods and chose second language for 3rd period from French, German or Latin.

**Sciences:** pupils study 2 periods of core Science plus 2 periods of choice (2 from Biology, Chemistry or Physics) for 1 period each.

**Social Studies:** pupils chose 3 subjects from 4 (Classical Studies, Geography, History or Modern Studies) for 1 period each.

### **Development of National Qualifications**

The National Qualifications framework of examinations is currently in the process of being revised to take account of Curriculum for Excellence. Detailed ongoing information can be found on the SQA's website as follows.

[www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)

Our staff are currently reviewing Course Specifications for courses at National 4 and National 5 Levels which have recently been published. SQA have asked for feedback by 30 June 2011. Courses at National 4 will replace courses at Standard Grade General Level and Intermediate 1; courses at National 5 will replace courses at Standard Grade Credit Level and Intermediate 2.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications and Framework (SCQF) is being revised to take account of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and simplify the current system which has been seen, at times, as possibly fragmented.

The new Framework will be as follows.

<b>SCQF Level</b>	<b>National Qualification</b>	<b>Current Equivalent</b>
SCQF Level 1	Access 1	Access 1
SCQF Level 2	Access 2	Access 2
SCQF Level 3	Access 3	Access 3/Standard Grade Foundation
SCQF Level 4	National 4	Intermediate 1/Standard Grade General
SCQF Level 5	National 5	Intermediate 2/Standard Grade Credit
SCQF Level 6	Higher	Higher
SCQF Level 7	Advanced Higher	Advanced Higher

National 4 and National 5 certification of courses will be available from summer 2014 when our current S1 pupils will be in S4.

Revised Higher courses will be available from session 2014-2015 and revised Advanced Higher from session 2015-2016.

Courses at Access 1, Access 2, Access 3 are being revised in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

Courses at Access 1, Access 2, Access 3 and National 4 will have no external examinations and course awards will be internally assessed with external verification (colleagues from, or on behalf of, the SQA will come in to schools to check assessment standards are being met).

Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will have external examinations set and marked by SQA.

### **Curriculum for Excellence Website**

The Curriculum for Excellence website contains all important information about the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and can be accessed through the Learning and teaching Scotland website as follows: [www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk)

### **Issues raised by parents**

The number of certificate courses to be undertaken by pupils in S4, and the impact this has on subsequent attainment in S5 and S6, was the major focus of discussion with parents during the question and answer session.

Currently, S4 pupils can undertake up to a maximum of 8 Standard Grade/Intermediate courses. Some pupils undertake less than 8, usually 7, as they are involved in the What's with Work programme which involves them undertaking courses at college one morning per week over S3 and S4.

Pupils who return to school for S5 almost always select 5 courses of study from the 8/7 they studied during S3 and S4. Pupils who return for S6 select a further range of courses which may include courses undertaken in S3-S4 but not studied during S5.

The concern that parents expressed was that, through the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, the number of courses undertaken in S4 is likely to be reduced from 8 to 7, 6 or possibly 5. The view was expressed that such a change may disadvantage pupils in the following ways:

- if they leave at the end of S4 with less than 8 Standard Grade/Intermediate qualifications and are in competition for employment, training or college courses with pupils who left school previously having undertaken 8 Standard Grade/Intermediate qualifications
- if they are applying to college or university a reduced number of courses undertaken in S4 may restrict their choices in S5 or S6 and lead to reduced attainment

The courses currently being developed at National 4 and National 5 are all designed to last a notional 160 hours. Revised Higher and Advanced Higher courses will remain at 160 hours.

## **Recent statement from the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board on the Senior Phase**

The above statement, published in May 2011, focused on key aspects of provision for pupils in the Senior Phase and has been shared with staff and our Parent Council.

It reinforces the entitlements which all pupils should experience in the Senior Phase. These are:

- a curriculum which is coherent
- the opportunity to obtain qualifications as well as to continue to develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities
- opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work with a continuous focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing
- personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities that CfE can provide
- support in moving into positive and sustained destinations

Schools are expected to work in partnership to provide appropriate experiences for pupils. This might be with colleges, employers, voluntary agencies etc.

The new qualifications which are being developed currently build upon the Experiences and Outcomes undertaken by pupils in the Broad General Education (S1-S3) phase of their education.

The statement describes the view that the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence limits pupils to 5 subjects in S4 as a 'common misunderstanding'. It goes on to say that while '... formal qualifications will not begin before S4, learning which takes place in the Broad General Education can and should contribute to learning for qualifications.' Decision making around this area will be a key aspect of our consultation.

### **Next Steps**

As part of our continuing consultation on the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence we shall begin to focus on the transition of pupils from S2 into S3 and, subsequently, S3 into the Senior Phase. This consultation will involve engagement with pupils, parents and staff to enable us to gather views and explore the issues around key aspects of implementation.

At Council level, Education Resources wishes each school to engage with its partners and reach individual decisions on such issues.

I shall keep you up to date with an outline plan of how we shall go about consultation on such matters but we do hope to conclude engagement and reach decisions by the end of October 2011.

Mark Sherry  
Head Teacher  
20 June 2011