

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
27 August 2015

Agenda Item	14.
Report No	ECAS 60/15

Progress Report on the implementation of the Broad General Education

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on progress to date with the curriculum in Highland Secondary Schools.

1. Background

- 1.1 This report was requested by members, following an update on progress of support for schools in the Broad General Education (BGE). This report focusses on how the Broad General Education is progressing in Highland secondary schools and how learner pathways are developed into the senior phase of education.

2. Transitions from Primary into Secondary Schools

- 2.1 All of our schools work in Associated School Groups (ASGs) encompassing the secondary school and associated feeder primary schools. All ASGs in Highland work together to ensure that the transition from primary to secondary school is as seamless as possible. This includes visits from secondary staff to the associated schools, transfer of information, opportunities for pupil visits, parent information meetings and identification of further support where needed. As a result of this preparation and hard work, almost all of our pupils experience a successful transition from primary to secondary school.
- 2.2 For most pupils entering secondary school, learning is predominantly at Level 3, and through the Broad General Education young people progress through this level and on to Level 4. Every young person is different and the pace of progress can be different. Some pupils entering secondary school will not yet be working at the third level, and schools ensure that each child does not simply rush through levels, but rather they work to ensure that each learner grows in the skills and confidence to become secure in their learning before moving to a more advanced level.
- 2.3 Whilst pastoral transitions for pupils in Highland are traditionally very strong, there is further work to be done to ensure that transitions in learning in the curriculum are as strong and build upon prior learning. Highland Schools are not alone in this and this has been identified as a development area for most Authorities across Scotland. The recently developed frameworks for learning ensure that there is a clear progression of skills in each curricular area that will allow pupils and teachers alike to be able to identify strengths and next steps in learning.

3. The Rationale for each Secondary School Curriculum

- 3.1 The curriculum is now defined as the totality of all that is planned for children and young people and encompasses ethos and life of the school as a community,

curriculum areas and subjects, inter-disciplinary learning and opportunities for personal achievement. This means that each school has to consider how subject areas link together and can no longer focus on just individual curriculum areas and subjects. This involves teachers making links across subject areas (inter-disciplinary learning) and providing planned opportunities for wider achievements.

3.2 Schools in Highland have always offered a wide range of opportunities for pupils. Staff work extremely hard to ensure that these opportunities are in place, often giving up hundreds of hours of their own personal time to do this.

3.3 Every secondary school in Highland is either working on, or has in place a rationale for their curriculum. This identifies the unique attributes of the school and how the opportunities for personal development and wider achievement dovetail together to ensure that each young person has a high quality learning experience.

4. The Structure of the Broad General Education in Highland Secondary Schools

4.1 During S1 and S2, all pupils in Highland will study subjects in all curricular areas. During S3, learners continue to work on their broad general education whilst preparing to enter the Senior Phase. This may include making some degree of choice within their subjects for S3, reducing the broad range of S1 and 2 to allow for personalisation of learning. Schools in Highland will do this in different ways and different models have emerged with no one model being preferred above others. Some schools continue with the breadth of learning and make no choices at the end of S2, others offer choices within curricular areas. Some schools offer major or minor options, allowing pupils some element of specialisation whilst still ensuring the breadth of subjects.

4.2 All schools in Highland provide an opportunity for a key adult to support a young person in their learning but again this will be addressed in different ways. What is important is that somebody has an overview of a young person's progress and can discuss with the pupil their strengths and identify areas for further progress.

4.3 One of the criticisms of Curriculum for Excellence was that the Experiences and Outcomes are very broad and wide ranging. In response to this, Education Scotland have recently produced Significant Aspects of Learning against which a learners progress can be monitored and tracked through the Broad General Education. Schools and Education Authorities have been tasked with producing more robust data on progress through the Broad General Education but the fact that there is no means to do this in the Management Information System (SEEMIS) that is used in every Local Authority in Scotland, suggests the complexity of the task. Work in this area is currently emerging in Highland schools and tracking and monitoring through the BGE will remain a focus for improvement over coming years.

5. The Transition from the BGE to the Senior Phase

5.1 S4 - S6 is known as the Senior Phase and it is during this time that young people will develop their learning to be able to achieve National Qualifications. A great deal of debate has surrounded the number of subjects pupils should study in S4 and as a result, Highland Head teachers requested a steer from the Authority on this matter. The majority of schools felt that 6 qualifications in S4 offered a higher quality learning experience for youngsters. There was some concern that schools

may be initially compared on quantity rather than quality of qualifications and thus it was preferable to have all schools offering the same. Highland has supported this request and schools are expected to offer 6 subjects in S4. Where this is not the case, schools are meeting with officers of the Authority to move towards this position. The number of qualifications and results will be monitored and remain under review. Again, Highland is not alone in this stance with other Authorities opting for a homogenous approach of 6 subjects in S4.

- 5.2 The new qualifications are outlined in the table below. Curriculum for Excellence Level 4 is described as being equivalent to SCQF Level 4. SCQF stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework which allocates a level of difficulty to each type of National Qualification. The SCQF ensures that New Qualifications are of the same standard as the previous ones.

SCQF Level	New Qualifications	Previous Qualifications
12	Doctorate	
11	Masters Degree	
10	Honours Degree	
9	Ordinary Degree	
8	Higher National Diploma (HND)	
7	Advanced Higher	
6	Higher	Higher
5	National 5	Standard Grade Credit Intermediate 2
4	National 4	Standard Grade General Intermediate 1
3	National 3	Standard Grade Foundation Access 3
2	National 2	Access 2
1	National 1	Access 1

- 5.3 The first year of the new qualifications went successfully and this is thanks in no small part to the commitment and dedication of teachers in Highland. Subject teachers pulled together to create and share resources, ensuring that the latest information or any changes to expectations were communicated quickly and efficiently. Development officers and working groups ensured that high quality teaching materials were in place for all to access and that training days and events gave the latest and most up to date information.
- 5.4 Because of the amount and pace of change, the Scottish Government allowed individual schools to choose whether pupils would sit the old or the new Higher. In Highland, head teachers consulted with their staff and identified the correct Higher for their context and their school. As a result in 2015 pupils will sit a mixture of old and new Highers. In 2016, all pupils will sit the new Higher.
- 5.5 As with the BGE, the senior phase curriculum will continue to be reviewed in Highland Schools. Schools are increasingly looking towards a range of qualifications to develop employability skills and are increasingly working with employers, colleges and partners to develop meaningful and flexible learner pathways. The use of ICT and distance learning offers exciting opportunities for centres to link up to offer every young person a personalised pathway to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be successful contributors and to enter a

positive and sustained destination after leaving school.

6 Implications

- 6.1 **Equalities, Gaelic and Rural:** there is a need to ensure that a highly effective curriculum is available to all young people across Highland including those who are vulnerable and in danger of missing out, those in rural locations and those in Gaelic medium education.
- 6.2 **Resource, Legal, Risk, Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** there are no specific implications associated with this report.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 Committee is asked to note the progress made in delivering the Broad General Education in Highland secondary schools.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 17th August 2015

Author: Ruth Binks & Jim Steven