

Education Scotland core strategies

Strategic objective 1:

Building a world-class curriculum



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1: What is this strategy trying to do?

This strategy explains how Education Scotland is seeking to implement its first strategic objective - to *Build A World-Class Curriculum*. It should be viewed in the context of our Corporate Plan together with the strategies for our other objectives. These strategies are intended to help all Education Scotland staff and our key stakeholders align work to increase positive impact. When planning and delivering our work, we will use these strategies both to underpin our activities and to review how effective we are being. This strategy paper embraces the totality of curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and support across all contexts in which Education Scotland works, including educational establishments, communities, with partners, with learners from early years through to lifelong learning, and their parents/carers.

[The Curriculum in Scotland](#)

The Scottish Government's lifelong learning strategy aims to ensure that everyone develops the attributes, knowledge and skills they will need for life, learning and work. The curriculum is all the experiences that are planned for learners to support the development of these skills.

This strategy is seeking to improve the lives of all of our citizens by involving everyone who has a stake in having a world-class curriculum in building it. Long-standing, seemingly insurmountable problems, such as the link between disadvantage and poor outcomes are being challenged through our strong, inclusive focus to promoting equitable outcomes for all by removing barriers to learning faced by many. Our strategy seeks to raise achievement and improve life chances for all and, in so doing, build confidence and trust in a modern, vibrant and ever-relevant curriculum. Our strategy has a strong focus on promoting and securing full alignment across national policy imperatives, including the Scottish Government's public sector equality duties and the associated equality outcome on education, and is underpinned by them. These include:

- Curriculum for Excellence;
- Getting It Right For Every Child;
- Teaching Scotland's Future;
- The Early Years Framework;
- *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*;
- *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*;
- *Equality Act 2010*;
- Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour;
- Youth Work Strategy and Statement of Ambition for Adult Learning; and
- *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill*.

What do we say in the Corporate Plan?

Our Corporate Plan contains clear commitments and measures for each of Education Scotland's strategic objectives. We want to build and support a learning system in which the strong collective engagement of a highly professional workforce creates a *virtuous cycle of improvement*. This learning system has learners at the centre and relies on a high-quality professional workforce to make it work. Our strategy for Strategic objective 1 (SO1) is underpinned by this cycle within the context of a broad national framework that informs professional judgement and choice.

'The Scottish improvement strategy for education relies on a clear framework of national guidance on the curriculum. This framework is broadly specified rather than narrow and prescriptive, and focuses on the outcomes and experiences which the system is expected to deliver. Curriculum guidance, and associated national guidance on learning, teaching and assessment methods, needs to be clear, coherent and well-founded on evidence of effectiveness. Any guidance must also leave practitioners with plenty of room to exercise their own professional judgment in determining exactly what and how they should organise learning to meet the needs of the learners in front of them. We have a clear role in ensuring that national guidance of this sort is established in all areas and that guidance is kept under review to ensure it remains fit for purpose in the years ahead. Our role in leading the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence is perhaps the most obvious dimension of this strategic objective but it is equally relevant to our lead role in the development and implementation of the new national strategic guidance on CLD. We also have a clear role to play in the development of curricula across other learner groups such as colleges.'

Education Scotland Corporate Plan 2013-2016

What does this strategy commit our staff to?

Having developed this strategy together, our staff is well placed to make consistent use of the approaches it sets out. Using this and the other Education Scotland strategies, we will promote capacity-building outreach activities, interventions, high-quality support materials and ambitious change approaches, underpinned by evidence of what works across all sectors. We will work closely with all stakeholder groups including, for example, the Scottish Government and National Implementation Board for teacher education to align all approaches to improving curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and support within the context of related national policy and the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) implementation plan. We will evaluate the impact of this strategy across all aspects of our work to ensure that it has a positive impact on learner outcomes in all sectors.

2: What do we believe about building a world-class curriculum?

We believe a world-class curriculum is the sum of: inspiring learning experiences; the very best, insightful, learner-focused teaching and excellent support; high-quality assessment for learning; and without exception provided in contexts which are important and relevant to learners' immediate and future needs. We believe it is:

- expressed clearly in national advice on implementing CfE and related policy guidance across all sectors;
- inspirational and motivating, enabling learners to be resilient and determined in the face of change and challenge;
- inclusive, accessible and responsive for each and every individual learner and recognises and realises learner's rights;
- aspirational and suitably challenging for each individual, being focused consistently on the unique needs of each learner;
- proactive in promoting an ethos and climate where learners develop positive relationships and manage their own behaviour;
- robust in providing for all the essential skills for learning, life and work, including health and wellbeing, literacy, numeracy, and digital;
- dynamic, flexible and adaptable, thereby maintaining its relevance in a changing world and global society;
- values-based, reflecting the values of justice, integrity, trust and respect, and in line with the rights of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR);
- meaningful and empowering for every learner and for every education provider; and
- as accessible and relevant to collaborative learning for groups of all sizes as it is to individuals.

We believe a world-class curriculum has a core body of knowledge, desirable attributes, relevant 'real-world' capabilities and skills, and is clearly set out through broad national guidance without limits or boundaries. We believe it has:

- flexible pathways to success for every individual according to their needs and aspirations;
- explicit relevance for each individual without being prescriptive or limiting;

- clear purpose, defined outcomes, and the means by which success can be measured;
- the very best, reflective and ambitious practitioners who take responsibility for their own professional growth and learning, who feel valued and trusted to innovate;
- strong partnership working across sectors, communities and agencies, together with learners and their parents/carers; and
- leaders at all levels with a clear view of the future needs of learners and who are equipped with the means by which to improve outcomes for all.

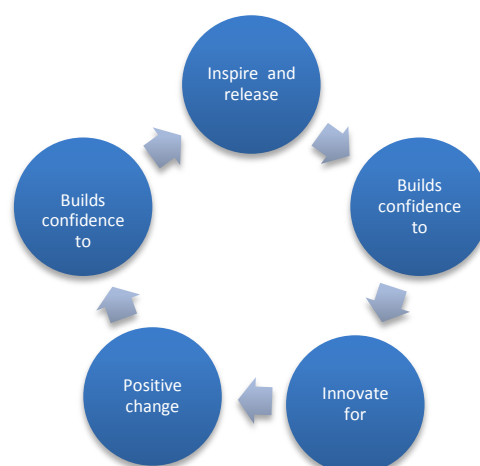
We believe a world-class curriculum can be kept relevant by involving everyone who has a stake in it in a collaborative partnership which uses first-hand experience and research to evaluate and guide its development. We believe it can:

- actively promote equalities for all and be the driver of change in society;
- extend hopes and aspirations by opening up new horizons and possibilities for learners and their families, and inspire communities to transform themselves for the better;
- make a strong contribution to ensuring sustainable economic growth in Scotland through a highly skilled, adaptable workforce;
- change people's preconceptions about how learning can transform lives for the better and empower learners and practitioners to be aspirational in their ability to succeed;
- nurture creativity and divergent thinking in all learners and practitioners;
- enable each and every learner and practitioner to fulfil both their individual potential and to combine to greater effect in meeting group potential;
- help learners to create their own place in the world by becoming responsive, creative, life-long learners;
- regenerate and change to respond to the changing needs of learners and the circumstances in which they find themselves; and
- be a place where learning itself drives the use of technologies, where cutting edge technologies promote higher-order skills and enrich learning.

Overall, we believe a world-class curriculum will prepare our citizens for a purposeful and fulfilling life in a fair society and, in so doing, be an inspiration to others. We believe we can achieve this by developing a shared understanding, underpinned by evidence and research, of what is meant by 'world-class'. This means adopting an agreed framework for self-evaluation and validation to measure success in a process that involves all stakeholders. The following section describes how this will happen.

3: What are the key features of implementation?

Working together, education providers, their partners and stakeholders have the capacity to develop a world-class curriculum through excellent learning, teaching, assessment and support. Working together, we have the capacity to meet the present and future needs of children, young people, adults, families and communities in an ever-changing world. This means nurturing a new confidence that best change is that which is based on trust and respect for local decisions, within the context of broad national guidance and constructive accountability. This requires building confidence in the role played by Education Scotland as a constructive partner in promoting innovation for positive change. In implementing our beliefs described above about a world-class curriculum, the key levers we are using to build this relationship fall into three categories, namely – the culture of partnership for change, the approaches used to make change happen, and the way we are planning change and evaluating its impact. This section explores each of these levers in turn.



The culture of partnership for change

Critical to building a world-class curriculum and to maintaining its relevance is the need for all concerned to recognise the culture in which change takes place to ensure practitioners have *'plenty of room to exercise their own professional judgment in determining exactly what and how they should organise learning to meet the needs of the learners in front of them'* (Education Scotland Corporate Plan 2013-2016). This means building strong partnerships across national bodies, with local authorities and communities, with practitioners and their representatives, and indeed with learners and their parents/carers too. Leaders at all levels have a key role in inspiring a positive culture for change and showing they have the confidence to release those around them to innovate - values such as trust and respect need to be at the heart of the process. Professional trust creates the environment for practitioners to feel they have real permission and have been 'released' to innovate and make choices, as illustrated in the diagram above.

Partnerships are enabled and nurtured by carefully balanced and coherent approaches to professional dialogue for improvement, using a wide range of tailored approaches at both national and local levels. Accountability needs to be constructive and not seen as restrictive – people recognise that with choice comes accountability. Our strategy seeks to enhance this professionalism and leadership, actively gathering evidence about what works through inspections, reviews, collaborative professional enquiry and other activities, and using this information to both advise and to intervene proportionately with support where necessary. This starting point changes the nature of professional dialogue. It means that everyone involved, be they practitioners, learners or their parents/carers, head teachers or inspectors, education authority officers or service managers, works together with a common purpose.

Our strategy recognises this strength in partnership working, building on the national curriculum debate in 2002, in setting up the Curriculum, Learning, Teaching, Assessment

and Support (CLTAS) National Forums during 2014/15. These forums will ensure that children's and young people's needs continue to be met at a time when the complex world is changing around them. As such, the overall purpose of the CLTAS National Forums is to secure, consolidate and embed improvements to the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and support, and to maintain their relevance, to deliver high-quality outcomes for all learners.

The approaches used to make change happen

We plan our approaches using the learning system shown on the first page of this strategy. This involves gathering and using evidence from a wide range of sources including inspections and research to inform our actions, alongside meeting national legislative and policy requirements. We implement our actions using the change leadership approaches set out in our strategies for [Strategic objective 2 \(SO2\)](#) and [Strategic objective 3 \(SO3\)](#), in particular. Particular approaches include the following:

- Inspection and review is central to our work in promoting effective change. The process of scoping from self-evaluation, validation and evaluation through a range of activities, triangulation of sources of evidence, professional dialogue and reporting, creates a uniquely powerful context for improvement.
- Professional dialogue is key to effective implementation of this strategy and it takes place in all of our interactions with stakeholders. Because we use evidence from local and national contexts, Education Scotland staff have a unique perspective through which to contribute to this dialogue. Professional dialogue is about capacity building through reflective, shared enquiry. It takes place in inspection and review activities, in support visits to establishments and services, in networks and communities, conferences, seminars and conversation events. It is prompted by many of our publications and support materials because they are designed to stimulate professional debate amongst practitioners.
- Using evidence from a range of sources is key to effective intervention. Evidence now comes from inspection and review findings, research, statistical analyses of a wide range of indicators such as leaver destinations, benchmarking approaches including international surveys, the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy, and regular engagement with education authority senior staff, for example. This evidence underpins our approach to professional dialogue and sharing through our learning system.
- Enhancing Teaching, Enriching Learning is a specific project designed to create a unique and inspiring learning environment for Scottish education. It relates closely to the systems described earlier and is being developed to provide a place where anytime sharing, collaboration and co-creation can take place across the Scottish education community. It is aiming to promote personal and group learning and creativity, and when complete will provide world-class content for ready access to users. It is also very dependent on the creation of an enhanced culture of sharing across professional learning communities, irrespective of location.
- Local Partnership Agreements are being developed with local authorities. These agreements aim to provide customised support based on identified needs and will help improve outcomes for learners. Teams across Education Scotland use a range of approaches working alongside local authority staff to deliver the agreed package of support.

- Our approach to promoting effective change management approaches is described fully in our strategy for SO3. It involves the powerful combination of three key perspectives for driving change - namely by looking inwards, looking outwards and looking forwards, together with the use of a range of highly-effective change tools within the cycle of improvement planning. It also involves providing support materials and advice across a wide range of aspects of curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and support – support materials that enable practitioners to make professional choices about what is best for the learners they serve.

Planning of change and evaluation of impact

Our planning takes place within corporate arrangements that are currently the subject of reform, with a new process being designed for session 2015-16. Approaches for business planning in 2014-15 relate to the following principles.

- All planned actions are founded on needs analysis, evidence from inspection and review, widespread consultation, SG policy requirements and horizons scanning, and located within the CfE Implementation Plan and other sector plans.
- All planned actions relate explicitly to one or more of the three outcomes specified in the Education Scotland Corporate Plan 2013-2016.
- All planned actions are designed to include approaches to gauging impact on outcomes for learners.

Actions are planned specifically to take forward each of the following 13 themes of SO1 as published in our 2013-2016 Corporate Plan, and include inputs from across all Education Scotland's Directorates. We will:

- Lead a national partnership to drive improvements to the curriculum, 3 to 18 through the CfE Implementation Group.
- Deliver enhanced national support and guidance targeted on key priority issues agreed annually through the overall Curriculum for Excellence implementation programme, including support for the new senior phase.
- Focus on reducing inequity in educational outcomes for all learners by working with partners to identify and drive effective strategies to improve achievement.
- Prioritise improving the progression of all learners in all stages and sectors, and across transitions, from early years to post-16 education, training and lifelong learning.
- Engage in collaborative outreach activities and create high-quality resources to drive improvement in learning, curriculum and assessment.
- Establish a new structure of curriculum review boards, with the involvement of stakeholders, parents, learners and other partners, including industry, which will ensure the curriculum remains relevant and capable of delivering high-quality learner outcomes.
- Lead a national partnership to ensure the effective implementation of CLD strategic guidance with the aim of building stronger communities to help improve the life chances of people of all ages.
- Strengthen our partnership with colleges and the new College Development Network to influence improvements in the experiences and attainment of learners.
- Develop a new national intranet and promote the use of digital technologies to encourage the most innovative practice for learner progression and effective teaching.

- Develop a portal for parents to access coherent and high-quality information about education in Scotland and all relevant information on individual schools.
- Work with the Scottish Prison Service to transform the education provision and improve learning outcomes for young people, for example at HM Young Offenders Institute Polmont.
- Provide specific programmes of enhanced curricular and pedagogical support to strengthen provision in key priority areas of learning, including Gaelic and the Scots language, Scottish Studies, the advancement of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), enterprise and employability, modern languages, early years and the creativity action plan.
- Support the embedding of learning for sustainability in the curriculum by encouraging the adoption of a coherent whole-school approach to global citizenship, sustainable development education, children's rights, outdoor learning and play.

4: How will we evaluate the impact of this strategy?

We will work with teams across Education Scotland to evaluate the impact of the strategy through:

- establishing rigorous and systematic approaches for teams to self-evaluate their work using this strategy and to report on the extent to which they are making a difference;
- gathering feedback from our staff on how the strategy is impacting on our work;
- establishing systems to gather feedback from stakeholders on how well they see Education Scotland providing the kind of interventions they need to bring about positive change in the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and support;
- carrying out an annual impact assessment on a small number of priority areas, including equalities, to be identified through the business planning process; and
- requiring teams to report on the impact of the strategy on an annual basis to the Strategy Group and through this to provide evidence to the Strategic Impact Board.

How will we know if we are succeeding?

We will gauge the impact of our work against the following four key indicators:

- Learner outcomes will improve for all and become increasingly more equitable.
- Education providers and users will express increased confidence that the changes they are making in curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and support are having a positive impact on learning and learners.
- Feedback from practitioners, providers and our partners will confirm that Education Scotland is working more effectively and collaboratively with them to provide the right kind of support through a blend of professional dialogue and support materials.
- All key stakeholder groups recognise that they can contribute to a national professional learning community that is helping to ensure the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and support remain relevant and are improving.

Each of these outcomes will be measured through an appropriate blend of local, national and international benchmarking data, professional dialogue approaches, evidence from inspection, review and research, and user perception surveys.

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