



Education
Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Transforming lives through learning

Report of a Thematic Review in the Moray Area



1. Context of Review

This thematic review of the Moray Area was one of a range of new approaches to inspection and review being tried out across the 2015-16 academic session¹. We agreed with Moray Council that we would explore how well different learning pathways in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence lead to positive destinations for young people. This theme was chosen as positive destinations are a high priority within the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) agenda².

A team of inspectors with expertise in secondary schools, college and community learning and development undertook this review over the week beginning 30th November 2015. We explored the agreed theme by setting out to answer four questions:

1. How well do senior phase pathways ensure high levels of attainment and achievement and positive destinations for young people from all backgrounds and circumstances?
2. How well do partnerships enhance learning pathways in the senior phase?
3. How good is the support for young people in the senior phase and during transitions?
4. How effective is the strategic leadership and management of senior phase learning pathways?

We used themes and descriptors from the relevant quality frameworks³ to support us in answering the above questions and to benchmark our evaluative comments.

1 Education Scotland website – Future approaches to inspection and review
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/about/principles/futureapproaches/index.asp>

2 Education Working For All! Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce final report (2004)

3 All relevant frameworks can be found on our National Improvement Hub

2. Background

The data collected in the latest census of 2011 showed that Moray has a larger proportion of population aged 15 and under (18.2%) than that of Scotland (17.3%). However, the proportion of adults aged 16-29 in Moray (16.1%) is markedly below the Scotland average (18.5%). Traditionally, a significant number of young people have moved away from the area. A range of factors influence the choices and aspirations of young people, including culture, educational and employment opportunities, the cost of living, transport, and housing. Most of Moray's population lives in datazone deciles 5-8 of a 1-10 scale, with 1 indicating the areas of highest deprivation and 10 the least, as designated by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). None of the population of Moray lives in decile 1, which represents the most deprived areas of Scotland. However, compared to the rest of Scotland, higher proportions of the population of Moray experience deprivation with regard to access to various services and opportunities. This is particularly the case for some relatively remote communities in the area.

The majority of workers in Moray are employed in wholesale and retail trade, health and social work activities, manufacturing and public administration and defence. A large proportion of manufacturing jobs in Moray are associated with the local food production companies, Baxters and Walkers, who have a significant workforce. The high volume of distilleries and fabrication firms located in the area also employ high proportions of the workforce. A high proportion of Moray's workforce is employed in public administration and in defence as a result of the presence of the Kinloss Army Base and RAF Lossiemouth Base.

Moray's Economic Strategy⁴ (2012) puts forward a vision for Moray to be a "vibrant 21st century region with a broad business base providing stable well-paid employment and strong communities with a growing population". Its key targets include encouraging population growth; increasing employment opportunities, and increasing average earnings. Targets for improvement are outlined in *Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future* (2013)⁵ to address changing demands for specific services and to maintain a high quality of life for communities. The plan states that "Matching our educational outcomes to the needs of the economy will be key to (our) ambition, and we will seek to enhance the links between businesses, schools and the college".

⁴ Moray Economic Strategy (2012)

⁵ Moray 2023 – A Plan for the Future (2013)

High-quality education in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence for young people aged 15-18 will support the achievement of the vision for Moray. Contributors to learning at the senior phase across Moray include eight secondary schools: Buckie High School, Elgin Academy, Elgin High School, Forres Academy, Keith Grammar School, Lossiemouth High School, Milne’s High School and Speyside High School; Pinefield PARC, a specialist provision for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD); Moray College (UHI); Skills Development Scotland (SDS); Community Learning and Development (CLD); Third Sector organisations; the Chamber of Commerce; and a range of local businesses as depicted in the diagram below.



3. Findings from the review

3.1 How well do senior phase pathways ensure high levels of attainment and achievement and positive destinations for young people from all backgrounds and circumstances?

All eight secondary schools in Moray have developed a curriculum model relative to their context while also taking account of council guidelines. Senior secondary school curricular options continue to be expanded and include learning in a variety of educational settings. For example, provision of centralised Advanced Higher Courses, opportunities to embark on a range of college courses and bespoke work experience placements have continued to develop in recent years. School staff and a range of partners including Moray College (UHI) are committed to extending these pathways further through a more varied range of certificated and non-certificated options. Increasingly, secondary schools are planning classes with a mix of young people across S4 to S6. This approach is improving opportunities for young people to undertake flexible programmes and courses which are more effectively meeting their needs. For example, where appropriate, young people can study for National Qualifications at both Higher and National 5 in S4. School staff and partners rightly recognise that a broader range of options need to be provided for young people who require additional support with their learning.

Learning pathways through the senior phase are supporting almost all young people into positive destinations. The percentage of young people securing a positive destination on leaving school has increased over the last five years and is in line with that of a local authority which serves learners from similar backgrounds, and also with the national average. The proportion of young people in Moray who sustain an initial positive destination on leaving school has also improved in recent years. However, more needs to be done to identify and support learners who leave education and move to seasonal employment to secure a sustained positive destination when this comes to an end. Successful completion levels of young people aged 15-18 years on full time courses at Moray College (UHI) has improved steadily over the last three years. However, the rates for completion of these courses are still too low with too many young people enrolling and then not sustaining their involvement. Moray College (UHI) has recognised there is still a need to continue to improve retention levels of full-time learners, specifically those aged 15-18 years.

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Young people's achievements are improving overall across Moray. There has been a marked improvement in the range of opportunities for personal achievement in place and from which young people are clearly benefiting. These include volunteering, sporting, cultural and outdoor learning as well as leadership development opportunities, both in school and in the wider community. Young people are developing their awareness of the skills that they are developing and applying through accreditation schemes such as Dynamic Youth, John Muir and Saltire Awards. Some of these programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award require to targeted better to those who would benefit most and be extended further across the Moray area to bring about greater access and equity. There is scope for a greater degree of accreditation overall.

Young people highlighted the important role that staff need to play in supporting their health and wellbeing. A lack of confidence in taking responsibility for aspects of their own learning is preventing many young people from accessing and benefitting fully from the opportunities available to them. This aspect of developing young people's health and wellbeing should be a continuing focus for education providers. In addition, there is a need to ensure all young people who learn through full- or part-time college programmes are appropriately supported to develop a full range of independent study skills. They often have useful research, presentation and team-working skills, but are less skilled in areas such as note-taking, summarising, reflecting on information and analysis.

The pattern of young people's attainment in National Qualifications over the senior phase is improving in some key measures. There is room for improvement in examination performance, particularly at the upper stages of secondary school. In recent years, the attainment of school leavers has been improving and is in line with that of a local authority which serves learners from similar backgrounds and also with the national average. In recent years, the proportions of school leavers achieving both literacy and numeracy has been improving at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6. However, there is a need to improve the proportions of young people at S5 and S6 achieving both literacy and numeracy at SCQF levels 5 and 6. There is a need in most schools for a focused and coherent approach to ensuring that young people who do not continue with either mathematics or equivalent or English or equivalent as one of their subjects at S5 or S6 continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across these years of the senior phase. There is scope to explore further opportunities to support the development of literacy and numeracy outwith the school setting. Moray College (UHI) recognises the need to continue to improve attainment levels of those in full-time courses.



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3.2 How well do partnerships enhance learning pathways in the senior phase?

Considerable progress has been made in recent years by partners working together to provide and enhance flexible learning pathways for young people in the senior phase. Such partnership working is now well established. Partners such as secondary schools, Moray College (UHI), SDS, the Chamber of Commerce, CLD, Third Sector organisations and a range of local businesses work together to provide experiences and choices for all young people to develop the skills and attributes which support them in moving on to, and sustaining, positive destinations. There could be stronger alignment of CLD staff with schools in terms of planning for the senior phase. A review of the current senior phase programme is planned for the academic session 2017-18. Partnerships between the various agencies is rooted in positive networking relationships which individual establishments have developed, often through informal contacts. More could be achieved through formal partnership agreements which clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of all. This would support more robust evaluation of the impact of partnership working and joint planning for improvement. Across Moray, data-sharing between partners is at an early stage and is currently under-developed. A more coherent high-level rationale for Curriculum for Excellence in Moray which provides a framework that underpins the learning offer from all partners would support this development.

The partnership between secondary schools and Moray College (UHI) is providing opportunities for young people from all eight secondary schools to attend college on a Wednesday and embark on a range of courses at various levels. This includes vocational learning or the opportunity to study for Advanced Higher courses that may not be offered in their school. Young people are developing self-esteem, confidence and independence as a result of these experiences. Most schools have developed their curriculum timetabling very well to enable young people to attend college without missing learning for their National Qualifications. In a few schools, young people do not select the college option as this would involve missing some important learning at school. These schools need to draw on good practice in timetabling in other schools to ensure that all young people have the equal opportunities to benefit from attending college course. Some young people who require additional support with their learning are offered their college experience on a Tuesday and therefore do not get the same opportunity to develop social skills and learn with their wider group of peers as those who attend the Wednesday option. We have asked partners to explore how to address this issue. All full-time Further Education and Higher Education programmes offered by Moray College (UHI) offer effective progression routes.

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Moray Council has established a service level agreement with Moray Chamber of Commerce to support DYW developments with employers. Partners are keen to address the challenges involved in engaging the many small businesses in Moray in taking forward this agenda. This agreement has led to the recent establishment of a 'Developing the Young Workforce Regional Group'. There is confidence amongst partners that the work of the group is likely to enhance the engagement of local businesses. A 'Career Ready' programme, supported well by the Chamber of Commerce, is providing mentoring and support for young people who are unclear about their career path or next stages in learning. There are plans to extend this successful programme to all secondary schools by academic session 2016-17.

The partnership between Johnstons of Elgin and Moray Council is an example of highly effective school and business partnership working which improves outcomes for learners, and develops their skills for the world of work. It is worthy of sharing nationally. (see Appendix)

3.3 How good is the support for young people in the senior phase and during transitions?

Overall, staff in secondary schools are successful in meeting young people's individual needs. Across Moray, school staff are becoming increasingly familiar with *Insight*, the senior phase benchmarking tool which helps them identify groups of young people who would benefit from targeted support in the senior phase. Information received from a recent study conducted on the attitudes and aspirations of young people across Moray⁶ has the potential to help schools support young people further in achieving their potential and in moving to positive destinations. Young people's learning experiences are increasingly tailored to their individual needs. Continual improvements in partnership working are enabling young people to access programmes or experiences such as Career Ready, Skillforce or Reach programmes in addition to learning at school, college or work experience. Through these opportunities young people are developing their skills for learning, life and work and they are well supported during the transition to life beyond the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

⁶ Our Next Generation. Young People in Moray Attitudes and Aspirations. Research report. (2015)

Young people who require additional support with their learning benefit from mutually respectful relationships and collaboration between specialist staff and other agencies that supports them into positive destinations. However, some staff feel that that existing arrangements to access support are overly-complex and bureaucratic, resulting in delays to securing appropriate support for learners. A more effective multi-agency coordinated approach is needed to ensure that all learners, including those who require additional support with their learning, receive consistent support as they progress through the senior phase and into a positive destination. Young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) can access an appropriate curriculum through specialist facilities such as Pinefield PARC. Recent improvements in the referral system to Pinefield PARC have resulted in staff being better informed about young people's needs and prior learning. As a result, staff are able to support young people more effectively with the aim of ensuring they make significant progress over time and are being better supported into positive destinations. A recently appointed headteacher of social, emotional and behavioural needs will ensure these improvements are embedded across the Moray area.

A more effective multi-agency coordinated approach is needed to ensure that all learners, including those who require additional support with their learning, receive consistent support as they progress through the senior phase and into a positive destination.

Young people, including those from the more remote areas, are supported to attend college with transport costs provided by Moray Council. Recent improvements to the recruitment process for full-time further education courses have resulted in young people being more appropriately placed in courses and programmes which suit their needs. There are early indications that these new procedure are ensuring that more young people are able to complete their college courses. Full-time college learners receive helpful guidance and support as part of their induction programme. Central support services are accessible and responsive, and young people on full-time programmes have an allocated guidance tutor and one hour of timetabled guidance activity each week. Learners benefit from the structured guidance on offer, and this is helpful for those at risk of leaving or not achieving success.

Across secondary schools in Moray, partnership working with SDS careers staff has been improving and is now strong. Young people feel they have access to staff as required, and value the support they receive from their link career coach. Career coaches work well with guidance staff to embed the development of career management skills in personal and social education programmes. Careers staff work well with partners in Moray to enable young people to sustain a positive destination on leaving school.

Learners from a few secondary schools feel that a disproportionate focus is placed on supporting university applicants and that more support for learners exploring alternative pathways should be available. There is variability in the knowledge that teachers have regarding local job prospects and the full range of pathways and opportunities available to young people. Limited information on funding, specialist options, progression routes and support available for non-university routes restricts the ability of learners to make well-informed choices. Promotion of the full range of opportunities available to all young people is not yet consistent across secondary schools. For example, Modern Apprenticeships are not promoted well in some schools.

3.4 How effective is the strategic leadership and management of senior phase learning pathways?

Senior leaders in Moray are developing a clear vision for the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence, within the context of national policy and local priorities. There is evidence that this strategic leadership is impacting positively on the opportunities and outcomes for the 15-18 year age group. The range of different learning pathways for young people moving through the senior phase continues to increase. This is supporting young people well and helping them move into positive destinations. Communication of overall strategic direction and vision for senior phase learning pathways across all stakeholder groups could be improved. This would help stakeholders at all levels understand more fully the policy context and therefore engage more effectively in the development of a range of senior phase learning opportunities. Clearer understanding of aspects of the rationale for the senior phase curriculum such as labour market intelligence and economic development priorities would assist those planning and delivering learning programmes. Agriculture, hospitality and science, technologies, engineering and mathematics (STEM) could form a greater part of the college offer to align better with local economic development priorities.

The purpose, role and structure of the CLD functions within Moray Council is not sufficiently clear. Partners are able to provide examples of committed CLD staff providing effective programmes which improve outcomes for young people. Overall however, the contribution of CLD to the senior phase curriculum requires clarification. Stakeholders have been involved in the development of the CLD plan for Moray. However, the plan lacks an overall coherence and clear targets. The role of Third Sector organisations in employability and senior phase curriculum partnerships is not sufficiently clear. Arrangements to ensure effective contributions from Third Sector organisations are not clear.

There is evidence that this strategic leadership is impacting positively on the opportunities and outcomes for the 15-18 year age group.

Parents and pupils in Moray have expressed concern in the past that secondary schools cannot provide the full range of subject choices selected by pupils. The council has faced a major challenge in teacher recruitment. It is taking measures to tackle this issue, including developing an agreement between the council and a local housing provider to subsidise housing costs for new teachers. Moray Council is also working with neighbouring councils to tackle the teacher shortage. It should continue to find innovative ways to address this issue which could adversely impact on senior phase provision. Plans have recently been approved to fund major improvements to digital technologies in Moray schools to facilitate further development of video-conferencing and online learning. There is recognition that this needs to be prioritised to enhance choice in subjects at senior phase.

Plans are underway to establish 'Employability Moray'. The establishment of one strategic partnership group which will oversee the Developing Young Workforce Regional Group and will also lead on employability, skills investment, and lifelong learning has the potential to reduce duplication, build coherence, improve communication and enhance strategic leadership of partnerships. This is a promising step and has the potential to act as a catalyst for further improvement.

The council has faced a major challenge in teacher recruitment. It is taking measures to tackle this issue.

4. What Next?

We have confidence that, across Moray, young people are being served well as they progress through the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence. We found interesting practice in the Johnstons Interaction Schools Project which we think is worthy of sharing nationally. Details can be found in the Appendix. Our Area Lead Officer will maintain contact with Moray Council to monitor progress on addressing the aspects for development identified in this report.

Marie McAdam
HM Inspector

Appendix

Johnstons of Elgin Schools Interaction Programme

Johnstons of Elgin, established in 1797, is a family-owned business. It is a successful textile manufacturer committed to producing luxurious woollen and cashmere garments and accessories. It is committed to retaining and developing traditional and increasingly rare textile skills in Scotland. The company employs over 1,000 people, with a wide range of vocations from waitressing to weaving to warehousing.

To attract and retain new employees, Johnstons approached Moray Council Education and Social Care Department to offer an education and business partnership experience for senior pupils. Young people from all eight secondary schools in Moray were offered the experience through a *Schools Interaction Project*. The schools selected a group of young people who they felt would benefit from a bespoke 'experience of work' program. The aim was to improve their skills for work so that they would become more 'work ready'. These young people took on the role of 'test pilots' and given a voice to evaluate the program and suggest how it could be improved for future groups. This was a role that the young people took seriously and they provided valuable constructive feedback.

Following on from the pilot project, a program has developed which involves 56 senior pupils. These young people spend two mornings at the Elgin Mill over a two-week period and learn about the history, heritage and values of the company. They have the opportunity to meet with apprentices and develop a new textile practical skill. During their visits they also develop an awareness of the range of jobs and careers available and get to spend time in their choice of department to find out more about a job or career they are interested in. In addition, the young people receive invaluable business-led advice on applying for jobs and preparing for an interview. Having been given this support they are then asked to complete and submit a job application form within a target date. During their third visit, young people are given the experience of a mock interview with a variety of Johnstons staff. They are given immediate constructive feedback on both their interview performance and the quality of their application.

The young people experiencing this programme gain a greater understanding of the range of jobs available to them with various entrance levels. It has raised their awareness of the potential job market open to them locally. This project also reinforces the importance of skills development.

From the company's perspective, young people and teachers who take part in the project are now much more informed of the range of jobs and career pathways that are available with Johnstons of Elgin. A number of young people who took part in the 2014-2015 pilot decided to apply for advertised positions with the company. Having gone through a recruitment and selection process, five were successful and moved on

to securing full-time employment in the Finance, Finishing and Retail departments of the company.

From their *Schools Interaction Project*, Johnstons of Elgin have also recently established a number of curricular links with local primary schools and curriculum areas in secondary schools. These are all based on helping children and young people develop their skills for work. Plans are now formulated for a pilot *Primary Schools Interaction Project*. Secondary school curricular links are in place for pupils who are studying for National Qualifications in chemistry, fashion & textile technology, geography, modern languages and travel & tourism.

Following the success of this project in Moray, a similar *Schools Interaction Project* has since started with Scottish Borders Council (SBC). Three SBC secondary schools are now working with the company's mill in Hawick.

From the outset, Johnstons of Elgin viewed their *Schools Interaction Project* as a 'learning experience'. Johnstons feels that it has not only learned a lot about itself as a company, but also learned much from the young people and the schools that it has worked in partnership with. This new learning has given it greater impetus to become a 'Learning Organisation'. All involved feel that this has "been a true partnership approach. It has been built on mutual respect, trust and honesty with all parties prepared to devote time, energy and commitment to the overarching aim of Developing the Young Workforce in our local communities".

