



*Putting Young People First*

**Taking Forward CFE in the Senior Phase in St. Andrew's Secondary School**



## **Context of School**

Saint Andrew's Secondary School is in the East End of Glasgow serving the areas of Carntyne, Shettleston, Easterhouse, Cranhill, Garthamlock and Sandyhills. The school has a roll of 1750 and 80% of the young people live in SIMD 1 and 2.

The school has a 33 period week, which is organised into 32 periods plus two 25 minute Tutor periods per week.

## **Senior Phase Rationale**

The key drivers underpinning the development of our senior phase were:

- a commitment to delivering the senior phase entitlement;
- raising attainment and achievement at all levels and for each individual young person;
- a determination to develop an engaging senior phase for a large and diverse group of young people with a wide range of abilities prior learning (school stay-on rate 92%); and
- improving the quality of learning and teaching and learners' experiences offered within the senior phase.

Another driver was the need to address issues with the senior school curriculum which had been identified pre Curriculum for Excellence.

- The need to provide a more challenging and worthwhile learning experience at Higher, rather than a two term dash.
- Feedback from S6 pupils and their parents identified that sitting the lower qualification did not help them achieve the Higher and, in fact, was a hindrance to their progress.
- A number of pupils were not engaged by a solely academic curriculum and their needs were not being met by the curricular structure which was in place.

## **The Senior Phase Structure**

The Senior Phase curriculum was structured into 3 pathways.

### **1. Two-year Higher pathway (70 pupils approx.)**

S4

6 subjects at Higher level x 4 periods  
4 periods Personal Achievement  
2 periods PE  
2 periods RE

S5

6 subjects at Higher level x 5 periods - presentation at end of S5.

## 2. **Core pathway** (200 pupils approx.)

S4

7 subjects at N4/N5 x 4 periods

2 periods PE

2 periods RE

S5

5 subjects x 5 periods

Personal Achievement and PE x 5 periods, adjusted to provide additional period for each Higher subject linked to number of Highers

## 3. **Employability pathway** (30 pupils approx.)

S4

5 subjects at N4/N5 x 4 periods in school

2 college afternoons (4 periods)

4 periods of employability/interpersonal skills/career and financial management (delivered by partners)

2 periods PE

2 periods RE

S5

As Core with 2 college afternoons. Some young people did Foundation Apprenticeships.

## **Parents and Partners**

### **S6 Parents**

Involving parents throughout the development of the senior phase structure was critical to the successful implementation of the senior phase. The views of parents of young people in S6, at the time of development, were gathered through individual interviews. Parents gave invaluable insight into the experience of their sons/daughters pre Curriculum for Excellence. They were particularly valuable in identifying what worked and what didn't work; and providing strong views about the number of qualifications and the place of vocational education. These views provided the basis for decisions about the senior phase structure.

### **S1 Parents**

S1 parents were consulted about the proposed senior phase structure. They raised issues of concern which we were able to respond to throughout the development process. Again, this was critically important to ensure that parents saw that their views had been taken into account and that they had ownership of the finalised structure.

## On-going Parental Engagement

Throughout the senior phase, parents are directly involved in monitoring the progress of young people. There are regular tracking reports sent home and there is follow up discussion with parents after every tracking period to explore next steps for young people.

This was very important in the two-year Higher pathway especially after the S4 exam diet when decisions were made about number of subjects and presentation for S5. Parents were involved in all decisions made about alterations to pathways.

The year group head ran drop-in surgeries for parents after the prelims in S5. This gave parents the opportunity to have one-to-one discussions about any concerns and about the progress of their child.

## **Partnership**

### Why it was Important

In different ways, the role of partners was critical in ensuring the success of our senior phase structure. We were clear that we could only provide the full senior phase curriculum if we had the involvement of a wide range of partners.

Partnership was essential to:

- provide the range of learning opportunities and courses to meet the needs of all learners;
- deliver the aspirations of the employability pathway;
- deliver additional programmes to ensure all our young people developed employability skills; and
- provide leadership opportunities for young people within personal achievement.

### The Involvement of Partners in Learning

- Partners, especially colleges, were involved in discussions during the design of the senior phase and especially the employability pathway.
- Our Partnership Base is led by a Partnership Development Officer from a vocational background who coordinates all engagement with partners.
- The community partners who provided programmes for young people in the periods remaining outwith the two college afternoons have ensured an excellent supplement to young people's experience on the pathway.
- Our colleges have negotiated with us every session to ensure that the courses offered in the employability pathway were those with the best employment opportunities.
- Higher education establishments have provided taster and focus days during the SQA programme for two-year Higher pupils.
- Business partners provided two weeks of employability activities for both National 4 youngsters and two-year Higher youngsters during the SQA exam diet. Most significant was Scottish Water, who provided STEM days at levels appropriate to young people's attainment levels.
- Our primaries provided leadership opportunities to lead activities as part of their sports and dance leadership awards gained within personal achievement programmes.

## **What we Learned**

- The S3 curriculum is central to our senior phase success. It is designed to stretch all young people as far as possible in their learning, particularly with regard to 'Enhanced Level 4'. 'Enhanced Level 4' provides the basis for our two-year Higher courses. It is planned learning that extends beyond the fourth Curriculum for Excellence level for the highest attaining young people. Feedback from our evaluation is that we need to develop a consistent clarity about how we define achievement at 'Enhanced Level 4'.
- A detailed senior phase learner journey planning process is essential. Year group heads engage with subject leaders and pupil support staff to ensure that young people are recommended for the pathway which will build on their prior achievement in the broad general education. This is supplemented by an open choice for young people enabling them to be placed in the subjects which they have attained to the highest level. It is critical to take as much time as possible to ensure that young people are on the right pathway and in the right subjects.
- The design of the two-year Higher programmes should ensure that young people are learning at the highest level for two years and that learning is engaging, with pace and challenge in both years 1 and 2. This is the improvement in the learning experience, particularly at Higher, which was a key driver for the design of the senior phase.
- The regular, rigorous tracking of pupil progress is central to the success of our senior phase. This ensures that there is clarity about the progress of young people across the school and there is prompt intervention in response to issues. Decisions can be made about adjustments to a young person's curriculum in discussion with parents and the young person. This has ensured that young people remain in courses which give them the best possible chance of success at the highest level and are given optimal support in all aspects of them.
- An S4 diet of exams was introduced for the two-year Higher pathway. This provided robust data at the end of the first year to inform decisions about the number and levels of qualifications young people continue with in S5.
- The employability pathway has been a very positive feature of our senior phase. The young people on the pathway are more engaged with their learning both in school and in college. They have achieved much more as a result, both in vocational and academic qualifications. Our young people on this pathway were more engaged with their learning; had a very positive experience at college; achieved more vocational qualifications than originally planned; and achieved more academic qualifications at a higher level than anticipated. They have also developed their employability skills through engagement with local employers, linked to college courses. These employers have provided taster experiences and advice on what was required to gain employment in the area.
- Personal achievement is built in to all pathways as an entitlement for all young people. We had to ensure that young people had a positive attitude to personal achievement and their experience in personal achievement courses was rigorous and suitably structured.

## **Impact of Senior Phase Structure**

The anticipated impact of the Curriculum for Excellence senior phase structure was improvements in attainment, measured in terms of breadth and depth, and continued improvements in sustained leaver destinations.

The actual impact in these measures was:

### 5+ Highers

In Year 1, the three-year average for the percentage of the S4 cohort achieving 5 or more Highers by the end of S5 increased from 8% to 13.1%.

### 3+ Highers

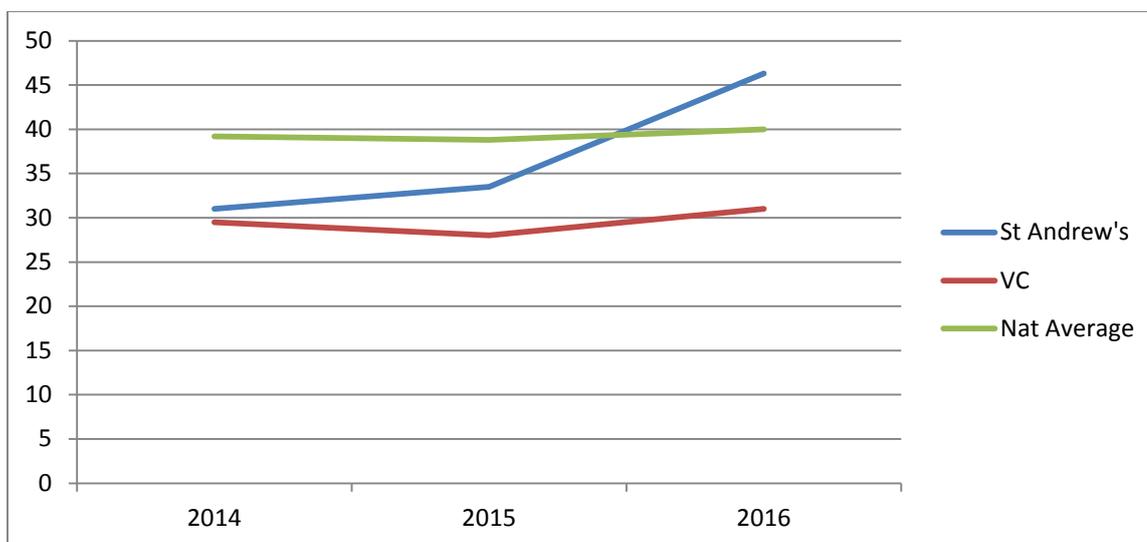
There had been a trend of improvement in this measure and in session 2014/15, 30% of the S4 cohort achieved 3 or more Highers by the end of S5. In year 1 of the new senior phase structure, this figure increased to 35%.

### 1 + Highers

This area also showed a trend of improvement with a figure of 50% of the S4 cohort achieved 1 or more Highers by the end of S5 in session 2014/15. In year 1 of the new senior phase structure, this figure increased to 59%.

### Destination Statistics

The school's three-year average for positive leaver destinations was 93%. In year 1 of the new senior phase structure, this increased to 96.6%. A particular aspiration was to increase the number of young people leaving school to go on to higher education. This figure in 2015/16 was 46%, higher than national average and 13% higher than the previous year.



This is the graph of which our school is most proud. It shows the increase in the number of young people who leave St. Andrew's to go on to higher education. This is a major challenge in Scotland. St. Andrew's is in an area of multiple deprivation, where young people are not gaining access to higher education. The graph illustrates the gradual increase in the number of young people gaining places. There was a significant increase last session. Most significantly, this year the percentage of young people leaving St. Andrew's to go on to higher education is higher than the national average, which is an exceptional performance for a school with our demographic profile.