

Secondary School Fieldwork

Summary Report

November 2015 – March 2016

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Introduction

Education Scotland visited 40 secondary schools across 25 local authorities between November 2015 and March 2016. Representatives of Education Scotland held discussions with senior managers, staff and learners and, where appropriate, observed aspects of learning in practice. The schools represent a range of factors such as deprivation and locality within the secondary education sector.

In particular, we were interested in finding out how schools are planning the curriculum to promote equity and raise attainment for all young people. This incorporates the extent to which effective partnership working is extending the curriculum and supporting young people to learn. Our discussions included how schools are using data to support self-evaluation for improvement.

This report represents the collation of the information shared by staff in the schools visited and the views expressed by them and other stakeholders during the visit.

Section A: Collated findings from discussions with senior managers

- i. Strategic planning for the 3-18 curriculum to promote equity and raise attainment, including approaches to assessing, monitoring and tracking progress
- ii. Progress towards better transitions for all learners
- iii. Using data and intelligence effectively to improve learning and achievement
- iv. Improving outcomes for learners through effective partnership working
- v. Progress towards achieving the aims of the Developing the Young Workforce programme
- vi. Delivering the new National Qualifications

Section B: Collated findings from discussions with teachers

- i. Strategic planning in the 3-18 curriculum, including the impact of career-long professional learning
- ii. Promoting more effective transitions through collaboration and information sharing
- iii. Use of data and intelligence to support improvement
- iv. Promoting equity of success and achievement
- v. Partnership working to support and enhance learning
- vi. Delivering the new National Qualifications

Section C: Further support from Education Scotland and national partners

Section A: Collated findings from discussions with senior managers

(i) Strategic planning for the 3-18 curriculum to promote equity and raise attainment, including approaches to assessing, monitoring and tracking progress

Schools are clear that curriculum planning involves ongoing evaluation and review to address changing contexts and meet the diverse needs of young people. Commendably, almost all schools have planned changes through extensive consultation with stakeholders, notably parents, cluster schools and, in most cases, partners. It is less clear that evaluation of the curriculum has involved partners.

All schools have altered their curriculum structure over the past year, or intend to do so. They identified the following drivers for change.

- Experience of delivering National Qualifications (NQs)
- Recognition that young people require suitably challenging learning in the broad general education (BGE) to prepare them well for the level of challenge in the senior phase
- Creating flexibility in the senior phase to help them respond more effectively to the needs of all young people and provide appropriate pathways to life beyond school
- An agreed authority-wide change to the overall curriculum framework.

Broad General Education

Almost all of the schools have introduced greater personalisation and choice in courses and programmes, particularly at the end of S2, with the aim of providing more time in the subjects chosen for greater specialisation in S3. The number of subjects studied at S3 varies most commonly from eight to eleven. Strategies to ensure all young people continue to receive their entitlement to a BGE include additional 'electives', 'master classes' or 'majoring' in one subject within a curriculum area. These additional opportunities are used to:

- provide deeper learning experiences within a curriculum area and ensure sufficient depth in all areas;
- reinforce areas of responsibility for all such as literacy and numeracy;
- deliver interdisciplinary learning (IDL) projects;
- introduce young people to new activities and important life skills; and
- allow for accreditation such as the John Muir award or a Saltire award through a range of activities.

While there are examples of effective strategic planning and challenging learning experiences within IDL projects, most schools feel that this is an area for further development. Elective courses and programmes introduced by some schools are proving a useful vehicle for this learning.

Schools are at varying stages of working towards the recommendations of the report *'Language Learning in Scotland: a 1+2 Approach'*, particularly around the introduction of a second additional language in the BGE.

Senior phase

Most schools have made changes to the structure of the senior phase, including reducing the number of subjects available to most young people at S4. Most of the schools visited now offer six or seven subjects at this stage. Almost all schools view S4 to S6 as one integrated phase, within an overarching timetable structure in six-year schools. Schools note the following positive outcomes of this approach:

- Flexibility to offer more courses and levels to meet differing needs, including meaningful horizontal progression.
- Through effective partnership working, the facility to offer all learners a range of academic courses and vocational options such as college courses, Skills for Work courses and work placements.
- Overall, fewer 'multi-level' classes, although this was not always the case.
- A more positive ethos at S4. A number of schools have reinforced this with an event to mark the end of the BGE and the start of a new phase. Schools report a greater social and generational mix within the senior phase and feel that the expectations of young people at S4 have been raised as a result.

All schools recognise the importance of developing suitable progression pathways through the stages. A number of local authorities have organised a common timetable structure across secondary schools to support college and consortia school arrangements. A few have set up a campus model for local schools to share with each other and with other agencies or business connections. Schemes such as the Open University, Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) introduce the most able to higher education working. These strategies are helping schools increase the number of academic and vocational options. However, rural schools face real challenges in linking with other schools and providers. Digital options are offering a possible addition in some areas of the curriculum.

All schools have bespoke packages for young people with additional support needs, supported by a range of partner providers including Community Learning and Development (CLD), Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and colleges.

Development of skills for life and work

Schools are encouraging young people to be more aware of the skills they are developing in all curriculum areas. In addition, schools offer opportunities for personal development and leadership through 'wider achievement' slots in the curriculum and activities outwith the timetabled day. In May/June, a number of schools organise a useful programme of events, often linked to employability skills, for those at S4 not sitting external examinations.

A few schools hold a 'wider achievement' database to monitor participation. Schools are clear that young people are building important skills and attributes through these activities. However, most are at the very early stages of considering progression frameworks for skills and tracking their development in young people.

Literacy and numeracy

Although schools are using a number of strategies to promote these life skills, most feel that literacy across the curriculum is further developed than numeracy. Literacy and numeracy working groups have supported common teaching approaches and produced helpful posters, skills booklets and online resources, for example.

A number of the schools have used tutor time to focus daily on aspects of literacy and numeracy. Others have introduced a dedicated period for literacy and/or numeracy. A few have made good use of the skills of the librarian in supporting writing and reading. The impact of these initiatives has varied.

Overall, schools recognise that embedding these skills and assessing and recording progress across the curriculum is a work in progress.

Impact of the curriculum on attainment

There is a growing sense that schools are considering how inputs across the four contexts of learning combine to impact on attainment. Specific interventions introduced to raise attainment include:

- supported study periods and peer support;
- tutor time;
- improved tracking and intervention through mentoring;
- digital technology to support learning; and
- fostering an ethos of achievement.

Given the climate of change, a number of schools have found it helpful to create temporary leadership posts with responsibility for developing and evaluating areas such as skills for work, IDL and employability.

Schools increasingly involve all staff in improving the curriculum through working groups and improvement groups which analyse the results of self-evaluation processes. A few authorities have carried out a programme of formal curriculum reviews. These processes have informed changes to the curriculum with a view to raising attainment. Few schools have evaluated formally the impact of recent changes on attainment.

Career-long professional learning

Much recent career-long professional learning (CLPL) has centred on the delivery, moderation and verification of the new NQs. *Understanding Standards* events, local subject networks and contact with local verifiers and markers have helped teachers prepare for presentations in the NQs.

Most schools have engaged in training on Insight. While this has supported self-evaluation and encouraged reflection on the needs of different groups of young people, most class teachers have not yet developed confidence in using Insight.

This session has seen renewed attention to the 'core business' of learning and teaching, particularly the sharing of practice. A number of schools have made the learning environment a priority, with a focus on positive behaviour strategies and raising aspirations.

Assessing, monitoring and tracking progress

The schools visited select from a range of data to identify and track progress. This has included:

- results from a variety of **standardised assessments**;
- recording in SEEMiS, or other electronic spreadsheet, the levels of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) within which young people are working;
- progress in subject knowledge and skills, using the **significant aspects of learning (SALs)**;
- on-going assessment, class tests and **formal assessments for NQs**;
- monitoring the progress of **identified groups** of vulnerable learners. A few schools indicated a need to track more closely those who fall into middle ability bands; and
- regular **learning conversations** with a member of staff who knows the learner well.

Schools are aware that the reliability of the evidence behind the recording of CfE levels can vary. In a few schools, the levels are not recorded. Departments are at various stages of using the SALs but are finding these a useful support for teacher professional judgement.

Schools have allocated professional development time to important moderation activities in departments and with other schools, through network meetings for example. This continues to be important, particularly for teachers in single person departments. In a few cases, this opportunity has not been available.

Schools are accustomed to tracking in the senior phase and feel that this is effective. Most are conscious that there is no robust whole-school overview of performance through the levels of CfE and are developing more rigorous approaches to assessing, tracking and monitoring young people's progress in the BGE. This includes reviewing the reliability of the evidence gathered.

Summary of positive developments

- A renewed focus on learning and teaching and the sharing of good practice.
- On-going review of curriculum structures to meet needs and raise attainment.
- Greater consultation with, and support from, parents and other partners.
- Greater flexibility in the curriculum, particularly in the senior phase.
- Increasing opportunities for wider achievement and subsequent accreditation.
- The range of interventions to support all young people to achieve.
- Recognition that the curriculum is 'more than the sum of its parts'.
- In almost all schools, a growing culture of reflection on the curriculum as a whole to effect continuous improvement.

Challenges experienced by most schools

- Continuing to raise expectations of achievement in the BGE.
- Developing effective use of IDL to support deeper learning and skills development.
- Developing more robust and reliable approaches to assessment, tracking and monitoring progress through the BGE, including in areas of responsibility for all.
- Building progression pathways in skills for learning, life and work and profiling these.
- Continuing to develop progression pathways with sustainable partnership working.
- Demonstrating the impact of the curriculum on raising attainment.
- Lack of teachers in some subject areas and lack of supply staff.
- Addressing issues around staff morale and workload.

(ii) Progress towards better transitions for all learners

Primary-secondary liaison

Almost all schools report good relationships with their associated primary schools. For example, they have planned together for joint learning and teaching initiatives. The schools visited are confident that they provide sound pastoral support for children making the transition to secondary school. All secondary staff benefit from important information on children's additional support needs. A number of schools have introduced a nurture programme to offer greater support to vulnerable young people.

All schools have an established transition programme with:

- visits to the primary schools by senior managers and support for pupils and staff;
- visits to the secondary school by children at P7, experiencing a 'taster' timetable;
- senior students from the secondary school acting as buddies;
- a range of joint events and activities, often including a residential experience; and
- an enhanced transition programme for vulnerable children.

Some clusters include:

- transition projects, often based around areas of responsibility for all;
- resource sharing, particularly for science and technology;
- teaching visits by subject specialists; and
- cross-sector learning observations.

Schools receive a range of information on children's prior learning which can include: CfE levels in all curricular areas; results in standardised tests; P7 profiles; P7 jotters and key pieces of work from P7 across the curriculum; and P7 reports.

In most schools, data on levels is restricted to literacy and numeracy. In a few cases, schools receive no data on children's progress. Secondary schools use standardised test results as a key source of information on children's progress by the end of P7. A few rely on their own baseline testing in English and mathematics. In general, where information on progress through the levels of CfE is available, secondary schools do not use this systematically to build on young people's prior learning.

Overall, schools feel that P7 profiles vary in format and quality. In only a few cases do these form the basis of the S1-S3 profile.

More than half of the schools have engaged in moderation activities with primary colleagues. This has focused largely on numeracy and literacy, particularly writing, with engagement in a few other subjects on a rolling programme.

Links between teaching staff across the sectors vary from connections in all subject areas to English or mathematics only. In a few cases, secondary specialists have engaged in the planning and delivery of lessons in a range of subjects. In a very few schools, a transition teacher supports progression by teaching literacy and numeracy at P7 and S1.

Almost all of the schools express the need to do more to ensure effective curricular transitions. A few schools report staffing shortages as a major brake on forming closer links.

Transitions across the stages

Schools feel that recent changes to curricular structures are leading to improved progression. At choice points, there are well-developed processes to support young people, including parental information evenings with representatives from other agencies and interviews based around available tracking data.

Most schools use personal and social education (PSE) lessons to explore careers education. An increasing number of schools have introduced tutor time to facilitate learning conversations on progress and pathways. Where this is working well, young people are developing a better understanding of their own skills and learning.

In all of the schools, young people complete a form of **personal profile** for the end of S3. This can be a useful focus for discussions on strengths and skills development. However, the impact of this work is not clear, nor the extent to which all schools use the profile to inform decisions on future pathways.

Post-school

Schools feel confident that tracking across the senior phase supports meaningful conversations about the future. A few schools have continued with a form of profiling in the senior phase to capture wider achievements.

Schools feel that increased partnership working is helping them support young people into positive destinations. Schools are particularly positive about the impact of support from SDS and the Employability Officer, where this post exists. A few schools are beginning to develop careers progression maps for local careers, with support from business partners.

Almost all schools offer specific careers advice in the senior phase. A few have encouraged young people to investigate career pathways before S3. Schools support young people with applications for employment, further and higher education. Visits to colleges, local industries and universities support the decision-making process.

(iii) Using data and intelligence effectively to improve learning and achievement

All schools gather data to inform self-evaluation for improvement.

- Almost all engage in **classroom visits** to monitor the quality of learning and teaching and inform professional learning activities.
- All schools seek the **views of stakeholders** on the school's work, through surveys or focus groups. The practice of seeking the views of young people on the learning experience is less consistent.
- All engage in analysis of **factual data** on performance in the BGE and the senior phase, including performance in national qualifications.
- All have specific data on **targeted groups** such as looked after children.
- All use **indicators** such as attendance data.

This data feeds into conversations on school improvement at school and authority level and is helping schools make appropriate interventions to improve attainment.

Increasingly, staff engage in peer observations, with examples of schools working collaboratively to share strengths and support each other in areas for improvement. This includes the practice of strong subject departments supporting those in the authority where performance has been poorer.

With strong support from SDS and additional information from local business contacts in a few cases, schools are beginning to consider labour market information in decisions on the senior phase curriculum.

Insight

Overall, senior managers are growing in confidence in the use of Insight although a few schools still refer to previous attainment measures. Insight has been used mainly by senior managers and curriculum leaders to support increased rigour in whole-school and faculty attainment reviews. Schools report that data on: SIMD cohorts; vulnerable groups; gender; literacy and numeracy; and the VC, is particularly useful. Insight is helping schools identify areas or groups of concern and target these in improvement plans and through the curriculum. A few schools indicated that awarding Insight tariff points for 'wider achievement' activities represents a positive development.

Training for Insight has focused largely on senior managers and faculty heads. However, all staff have been involved in discussions on departmental performance based on Insight data. All schools expressed a need for further training in order to make best use of the resource.

Concerns still remain in the following areas:

- A few schools continue to raise concerns over their perception(s) that the data is inaccurate as well as difficulties in extracting data at subject level and in generating custom reports.
- Smaller schools find the national picture less useful and prefer to look at individual performance for an accurate picture of achievement.
- There is some evidence, which might be worthy of further consideration, that some schools are beginning to allow Insight tariff points to influence their curricular provision.

Ensuring equity of opportunity

Insight data has made schools more aware of the specific needs of their local context. They use a variety of ways to promote achievement for all. Key approaches include:

- strong specialist support for those with additional support needs;
- robust monitoring and tracking to identify vulnerable groups or those underachieving and providing additional targeted support;
- effective mentoring and peer support;
- additional input for the core skills of literacy and numeracy to help all learners access the curriculum better;
- flexible timetabling, with a greater choice of vocational and academic courses and levels, to address individual needs and aspirations;

- a wide range of wider achievement opportunities which build confidence and skills for life and work and are celebrated equally with academic success;
- financial support to remove barriers to participation; supported study times and input on study skills;
- widening access initiatives involving local universities; and
- strong partnership working with support services, CLD, SDS and other agencies. All schools felt this was indispensable.

(iv) Improving outcomes for learners through effective partnership working

Almost all schools are developing important links with local employers and partner providers such as colleges, universities and youth groups. Schools in rural locations face real and significant challenges in finding comparable curricular support.

Key partnership links include:

- greater engagement with **parents** over school improvement, evaluation of performance and the purpose of curriculum change;
- teachers collaborating with **staff in other schools**, sharing practice and ideas;
- positive collaboration with **cluster schools** to promote common approaches and better transitions;
- well established **multi-agency** working around young people with additional support needs. For example, community learning and development staff are praised for their work in supporting groups of disengaged young people;
- engagement with **colleges** to access an additional range of academic and vocational courses to meet needs better;
- links with **local community organisations** such as the Rotary Club and emergency services. Schools speak positively of opportunities for volunteering in the local community and of supporting local charities. These enhance the curriculum with visits and provide opportunities to learn new skills;
- links with **outside agencies** such as Unicef and Eco-Schools which help build a positive ethos and sense of community;
- support from organisations such as Active Schools, youth organisations and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This means schools can introduce additional opportunities for personal development in timetabled electives, for example;
- useful inserts or events from **national bodies** including the SFA, SSERC and SCILT which enhance the curriculum and support teachers;
- **SDS** staff who help young people make positive learning and career choices and support them into positive destinations. This includes collaboration within 16+ groups. Although SDS staff continue to work mainly within the senior phase, they have begun to work with young people as early as S1 on career management skills;
- links with universities, which help more young people aspire to **higher education**. Staff welcome initiatives such as the Graduate Aid programme; and
- **business partnerships**. A few authorities have negotiated business partners for each of their schools over a number of years. This is allowing schools to plan worthwhile projects in collaboration with their business partner. Most schools hope to increase the number of sustainable business partners.

Schools are clear on the added value of these partnerships. As yet, few report any formal evaluation with partners of the impact of this work on improving outcomes for learners.

(v) Progress towards achieving the aims of the Developing the Young Workforce programme

The extent to which schools have begun to address this varies but schools are aware of the need for more strategic planning. A number of schools report that a temporary promoted post-holder with responsibility for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is helping them take a more strategic approach to developing vocational pathways and raising awareness of the world of work. Several schools have a DYW working group, through which they have begun to make plans and audit current provision, in liaison with SDS in particular. Around a quarter of the schools visited have begun awareness raising with staff and parents. Most are at the early stages of addressing the specific entitlements for children and young people set out in the national standards.

All schools have a range of work relevant learning opportunities in place and opportunities for enterprising learning within the curriculum to develop skills for learning, life and work (SLLW) in young people. Events already in place, such as Career Fairs and World of Work weeks, are being opened up to younger learners and their parents who have reacted positively to this opportunity.

Almost all schools have a few vocational qualifications embedded in the curriculum. In the best situations, these are well linked to work opportunities in the local area and include appropriate Skills for Work qualifications and National Performance Awards such as in hospitality, maritime skills or retailing. Links with local colleges enable young people to study for a wider range of qualifications, including HC/HNC. Programmes such as the Queen Margaret Academies Programme offer a useful blend of academic work, practical experience and employability skills which supports the transition to further study at college, university or into employment. A number of schools have had to persuade parents and learners of the benefits of these vocational options.

Almost all schools hope to introduce more vocational qualifications within curriculum areas. A few, such as photography, lab skills and the Languages for Life and Work Award, are already popular. A number of schools have introduced SQA Employability Awards and the Personal Development Award, to develop young people's life skills. Many schools are still in the early stages of this work and report that much depends upon their capacity to deliver, in terms of staffing. The locality of the school further affects the accessibility of vocational provision.

In a number of schools, business partners have begun to make a productive contribution by:

- supporting the delivery of programmes such as financial education;
- arranging for practical tutorials in areas such as engineering science;
- further supporting the delivery of vocational options by providing resources or work placements;
- advising on the relevance and context of courses; and
- conducting mock interviews.

In one example, a 12-month plan for a link with a local bank will see a group of learners at S4 work with bank staff on communication workshops, a personal finance course and skills for the workplace.

(vi) Delivering the new National Qualifications

Increasing depth and challenge in the BGE is aimed at preparing young people well for National Qualifications. Staff are reviewing assessment in the BGE to give them greater confidence in presenting young people for the appropriate level of course at S4.

Faculties have updated programmes of work following an analysis of results in NQs and to take account of changes to NQ arrangements. Teachers have appreciated the opportunity to share practice with verifiers, examiners and markers at SQA events and subject network meetings. Schools report that this has led to increased sharing between and within schools and has made teachers more confident in their decisions.

With a focus on progression pathways, a number of schools have introduced new courses leading to National Qualifications at a range of SCQF levels and are looking to introduce more National 3 courses. Almost all of the schools visited have introduced the new Higher courses gradually. Relatively few young people are doing Highers over two years or bypassing National 5.

Overall, schools feel that staff confidence in presenting young people for the new qualifications is growing. They note that information in Insight and SQA data such as component mark analysis have helped them review and improve programmes of work. However, almost all schools cite staff workload as an issue, particularly in single person subject departments.

Schools remain concerned about the impact of assessment arrangements which they feel have created unnecessary stress for staff and young people and impacted negatively on learning and teaching. This is of particular concern in 'bi-level' or 'multi-level' classes with young people likely to attain at different SCQF levels.

All schools are working towards reducing this burden through strategies such as:

- a whole-school assessment calendar combined with assessments spread out over a longer period of time;
- simpler ways of assessing, such as presenting information rather than writing it;
- using best evidence from the BGE as part of an assessment portfolio;
- tracking young people more rigorously through the BGE and beyond, creating confidence in decisions over presentations and avoiding double banking assessments; and,
- removing study leave for preliminary examinations and in advance of the NQ examination diet to increase teaching time.

Section B: Collated findings from discussions with teachers

(i) Strategic planning in the 3-18 curriculum, including the impact of career-long professional learning

Almost all staff feel they have been involved in developing the curriculum. A number continue to be involved in curriculum working groups and find this work energising. Following a review of the BGE in almost all schools, teachers are positive about the changes. Overall, they report that:

- young people are more confident and aware of their own learning;
- the BGE can support more relevant and responsive learning contexts;
- the revised BGE structure prepares young people better for the senior phase;
- there are opportunities for a planned approach to the development of skills;
- IDL has the potential to enrich and deepen the learning experience;
- electives give young people more choice and the opportunity to develop new skills;
- 'wider achievement' is a key feature of the learner's experience;
- the number of courses and levels available in the senior phase supports progression;
- the Es and Os at fourth level articulate well with National 5 courses;
- the S4-S6 integrated model is more flexible, facilitates progression and widens pathways for learners. 'Multi-level' classes, particularly in the sciences, present a challenge however;
- they are open to offering more vocational qualifications subject to budget and staffing; and
- well-planned tutor time gives staff an overview of learners' experiences and allows time for the learner voice.

A number noted that time to develop and deliver a coherent strategy for IDL is an issue. There remain concerns over moderation and assessment.

Staff are involved in evaluating the curriculum through faculty reviews, learner feedback on courses and subject uptake numbers. Given the amount of change, a few staff would like greater reassurance over the impact of developments nationally.

Literacy and numeracy

Staff appreciate the common approaches developed and supported by working groups. However, most staff recognise there has been little recent progress due to the focus on new qualifications.

Very few report any assessment or tracking of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. They feel there has been little time for this and that they need more discussion on the standards expected at the different levels.

Assessment, monitoring and tracking

Overall, teachers are growing in confidence in understanding the standards in NQs and the levels of CfE, but they continue to welcome opportunities for moderation in their own school and

outwith. There remain issues around assessment in both the BGE and the senior phase and over tracking performance in the BGE. Almost all teachers report that:

- knowing learners well and having regular learner conversations is key to tracking progress effectively;
- they are using a wider range of assessment tools although a few feel there is over-reliance on formative assessment. They do not feel that using 'developing, consolidating, secure' is helpful;
- building an assessment portfolio of class work makes assessment more manageable; and
- the SALs are promoting greater rigour in professional judgement within subject areas. The SALs for physical education are seen as particularly helpful.

Teachers recognise the need for a more consistent approach to tracking across the school and for an overview of learner progress which is easily accessible by them.

CLPL

Staff feel well supported by senior managers in terms of professional learning opportunities. Key areas of focus have been the development of new qualifications, pedagogy, Insight and, more recently, *HGIOS? 4*.

- **National Qualifications.** Subject network meetings and *Understanding Standards* events were described as crucial for moderation and for sharing ideas and concerns although network meetings have been variable in quality. Staff appreciate additional support from local verifiers, examiners and markers. A few staff have not had the opportunity to engage in moderation outwith their department.
- Teachers have welcomed the renewed focus on **learning and teaching**. This has been supported by in-house sharing of practice, including through activities such as learning rounds, teacher learning communities and cross-sector observations of learning. One school has found training in the use of tablets for teaching and learning has had a major impact on their practice.

(ii) Promoting more effective transitions through collaboration and information sharing

P7 into S1

- All staff report that information on children with additional support needs is helpful and informs their teaching approaches. This information is readily available.
- Information on prior learning varies but, in most cases, is limited to mathematics and English. Most commonly, moderation has taken place for English writing and mathematics. In general, where information on levels is available, it is not used systematically to inform next steps in learning. Most staff would welcome more detailed information on children's progress.
- Overall, little use is made of P7 profiles, which staff feel are too variable.

Teachers involved in collaborating with primary colleagues through working groups or shared teaching experiences have found this very worthwhile. They report that it helps them plan for progression more effectively. One school was clear on the impact on attainment of close collaboration with primary colleagues for science. In another, a department has been able to remove some units of work at S1, due to close links with the primary schools over planning and delivery of work at P7.

Across the stages, staff feel that the SALs, along with clearer knowledge of what is expected in National Qualifications, have helped them review their progression frameworks. Most schools are continuing to develop their S3 profile to support learner conversations better but this is a work in progress.

(iii) Use of data and intelligence to support improvement

- Staff find it helpful when key messages from classroom observations are shared and inform professional learning.
- Most staff use a variety of assessments to record and track learners' progress and identify underachievement in their subject area. Most have clear systems within their own department or faculty but note there is no common approach to tracking in the BGE.
- Generally, tracking in the senior phase is more standardised and staff can have an overview of a student's progress across the whole school.
- Overall, staff feel that Insight is helpful but that they need training and more time to explore it. They feel that Insight has given the department useful data for the subject performance report and for reviewing their courses and programmes.
- A number of staff note that gender information and SIMD information have been powerful in making them reflect on the curriculum. A few report that SIMD information has influenced their planning and one department has altered the learning contexts of one of its courses because of information on gender imbalance in attainment.

(iv) Promoting equity of success and achievement

Overall, staff feel that:

- their school is inclusive and that effective work to support identified and vulnerable young people has had an impact on attainment. There were examples of CLD input having a positive impact on attendance and behaviour for example;
- focused support for literacy skills has helped young people access the curriculum. In a pilot study, an ASN group had the same teacher and learning support teacher for English, S1-S4. The group is now aiming for National 4/National 5;
- changes to the senior phase are meeting young people's needs better. Being aware of the school's SIMD profile has made staff more aware of the need for a range of pathways, and;
- learning conversations and mentoring are helping groups of young people reflect on their learning. Almost all staff involved in tutor time have valued the opportunity to see a wider picture of young people's learning experiences.

More schools are presenting young people for National 1 and National 2 awards, led by support for learning staff. A few staff expressed concern that funding constraints are beginning to have a negative impact on support staffing.

(v) Partnership working to support and enhance learning

Almost all staff feel that partnerships are a valuable addition to the curriculum, bringing more opportunities for young people and professional benefits for staff. All feel that partnerships to support vulnerable young people are effective in keeping those young people in school and giving teachers strategies to support them. Other partnerships teachers value are:

- support from the local community, including parents;
- sharing with colleagues, which has had a positive impact on practice and confidence;
- consortia arrangements with other schools and colleges to offer more courses and levels. A few noted issues with those on college or work placements missing classwork but have been able to support young people in this;
- links with local businesses. Teachers have formed their own links independently to enhance the curriculum, such as a science link with a local electronics firm and a hospitality link with a hotel chain; and
- links with national bodies who offer inserts and visits which enhance their programmes of work, in particular links related to STEM were well regarded.

(vi) Delivering the new National Qualifications

Positive developments

- Teachers are more confident about the standards required and are reviewing progression from S1 to ensure key concepts and skills for the NQs are developed over S1-S3. They are clear that the BGE is not about teaching content for NQs.
- They feel progression from National 5 into Higher is better than that from Standard Grade to Higher. They feel that the qualifications are good overall and have a greater affinity with employment and creativity.
- Opinion was divided over the level of challenge of new Higher courses. Although a number of the schools feel there is still a high level of gradient from National 5 to Higher, they note that articulation between the two in terms of skills and concepts is good.
- The gradient of challenge between National 4 and National 5 means they welcome different forms of progression to meet differing needs. For example, moving young people from National 4 English and mathematics to National 5 literacy and numeracy in S5.
- Staff appreciate the usefulness of the exemplars although they consider these were not available early enough.
- The introduction of the Higher has been less problematic than the Nationals, with fewer last minute changes and clearer instructions earlier from the SQA.

Concerns

Overall, staff are concerned about:

- the need for more exemplification and support materials, particularly for Nationals 1, 2 and 3;
- the perceived status of National 4. However, a few felt the expectations of National 4 were too high, particularly the requirements for the AV Unit;
- the amount of content in a number of courses, notably National 5 mathematics;
- the challenges of teaching and assessing 'bi-level' or 'multi-level' classes;
- the continuing 'burden of assessment' and the perceived bureaucracy surrounding verification;
- variation in the quality of information to support moderation and verification. They have been frustrated by a perceived lack of clarity in documents and by several changes to arrangements;
- the intensity of Higher courses over one year. Where young people are doing six Highers in one year, staff are concerned about the time available for each; and
- staff workload, particularly where a one-person department has to deliver several new courses. In this, they value the support of colleagues in other schools.

Overall, they feel that the pace of change has left little time for reflection on the success of their courses and programmes.

Section C: Further support from Education Scotland and national partners

Support from Education Scotland and national partners collated from the views expressed by staff in the schools visited

Staff in schools use much of the support already available from national partners regularly. The following were mentioned specifically:

Education Scotland

Resources

- General advice on the curriculum. BGE toolkits
- Guidance on assessment and moderation
- Subject specific resources. These are valued especially by those in small departments. Particular reference was made to materials for numeracy, Scots language, HWB, sustainability and the NQ music site.
- Significant Aspects of Learning. These are used extensively.
- GLOW 365 materials
- DYW documents
- HGIOS? 4
- Inspection advice note
- Parentzone

Events/Communication links

- Bulletins and updates
- Support networks on social media and Twitter feed
- Curriculum for Excellence headteacher conferences
- Insight training with ES and colleagues
- Presentations by ES staff at headteacher meetings in local authorities
- Schools partnership programme
- Opportunity to take part in national working groups
- Involvement in case studies. A number of schools are keen to share their work and feel that being part of a case study would support their self-evaluation

SQA

- Updates
- Support materials for SQA qualifications in general
- Progression frameworks and verification information in particular
- Opportunity to work as markers, verifiers, examiners with SQA
- *Understanding Standards* events

Staff also recognise good support from SSERC and SCILT. They note the importance of the GTCS website for research publications and information on professional update.

Staff feel that the Education Scotland fieldwork visits are an important way of having their views heard.

Education Scotland
<p>Broad General Education (BGE)</p> <p>Senior managers and practitioners requested that Education Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide up-to-date examples of effective curriculum planning• ensure that messages about the BGE are clear and simple. A number of staff feel there has been a lack of clarity in the past.
<p>Monitoring and tracking/assessment</p> <p>Senior managers and practitioners requested that Education Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide a discussion forum and examples of benchmarking, tracking and monitoring in the BGE• provide advice on assessing and tracking health and wellbeing in particular• provide advice on managing assessment and support the case against over-assessment in National Qualifications. There were mixed views on the usefulness of the NAR.• facilitate the national sharing of examination practice papers, as with the sharing of authority resources for National Qualifications. However, there are concerns around the quality assurance of some materials online.• give teachers the opportunity to be involved in decisions relating to the development of the new national assessments.
<p>Updates and support materials</p> <p>Senior managers and practitioners requested that Education Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• send subject updates directly to principal teachers/curriculum leaders• provide more support materials, notably for CDT, ICT, business education, and vocational/Skills for Work courses• provide more exemplars of third and fourth level across subject areas• reduce the pressure from over-frequent lengthy emails with updates. This has to be balanced by the need for information. There was a suggestion for a form of newsletter with a list of the latest support materials and an appropriate link.• provide more advice and examples of effective and innovative practice, notably in DYW, IDL, universal support and tracking and monitoring in the BGE.• provide advice and examples of good primary-secondary liaison, including moderation processes• provide video clips of subject teaching.
<p>Skills for life and work</p> <p>Senior managers and practitioners requested that Education Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide clarity on what is expected of a skills based curriculum• provide advice on tracking the development of skills across the curriculum.

National Qualifications

Senior managers and practitioners requested that Education Scotland:

- provide more support materials and exemplification of levels for the National Qualifications in literacy and numeracy, with examples of how to profile progress.
- provide more support materials for Higher and Advanced Higher courses
- produce a list of 'alternative' courses for progression purposes. For example, Scottish studies or media from English.
- Provide Apps with support documentation for young people.

Digital support/technology

Senior managers and practitioners requested that Education Scotland:

- improve GLOW technology to make resources more easily accessible. This remains an issue for both staff and learners.
- improve the search facility on the website. The website remains difficult to navigate.
- consider the provision of a national e-portfolio system in GLOW, which could be accessed by staff and learners. This was seen as a way of providing profiles of uniform quality.
- organise a database of schools willing to share resources
- provide an online forum for teachers to ask questions of Education Scotland colleagues

General points for consideration

Senior managers and practitioners requested that Education Scotland:

- engage business and community partners in a greater understanding of Curriculum for Excellence and the principles of DYW
- facilitate the pairing of learning partners, using their knowledge of schools
- provide guidance for using Insight effectively in small schools
- provide more opportunities for staff to become associate assessors
- provide further engagement opportunities around HGIOS? 4 and the new inspection models
- allow schools time to consolidate following a period of considerable change.

SQA

Support for new qualifications

Overall, staff feel that the introduction of the new Highers and Advanced Highers has gone more smoothly than that of the Nationals, with fewer late amendments.

Senior managers and practitioners requested that SQA:

- provide more materials to support the effective preparation of candidates for NQs
- provide more support for Nationals 1, 2, 3 in particular and further exemplification for National 4 and National 5 literacy and numeracy
- ensure all information on national qualifications and verification is clear and consistent within and across subjects
- improve the quality and timing of amendments and advice, simplifying the documentation and avoiding unnecessary repetition
- make it easier for staff to identify the latest updates by including a date on the latest version and highlighting the change
- provide the facility for staff to add comments to online resources/information to highlight concern or confusion.

National 4

Senior managers and practitioners requested that SQA:

- review the position of National 4, which is undervalued. In contrast, staff request that the SQA review the level of expectations of National 4.
- review the use and level of challenge of the Added Value Unit at National 4
- review the level of difficulty between National 4 and National 5
- review the amount of content required for National 5 courses, particularly mathematics.

General points for consideration

Senior managers and practitioners requested that SQA:

- take action to reduce assessment
- provide an online discussion forum for national qualifications, including examination questions
- provide up-to-date videos of teachers preparing young people for national examinations
- continue to host regular events to support the on-going implementation of new qualifications.

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