

The Involvement of External Experts in School Education

November 2012

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Background**
- 3. External Experts**
- 4. External Experts Working Alongside Teachers**
- 5. Role of the Teacher**
- 6. Planning**
- 7. Training and learning**
- 8. Safeguarding**
- 9. Benefits for children/young people**
- 10. Benefits for Teacher**
- 11. Benefits for School**
- 12. Benefits for external expert**
- 13. Accessing External Experts**
- 14. General Features of Best Practice**
- 15. Recommendations**
- 16. Appendix A**

The Involvement of External Experts in the Delivery of Teacher-led School Education

1. Introduction

This paper is provided in response to the Cabinet Secretary's statement in Parliament of 9 February 2012. In this, he said that "many schools have already created partnerships with universities, colleges, local employers or third sector and community groups. If we are to build a varied, pupil-centred education for all children and young people then it will be necessary for our schools to draw on a wide range of resources—including a range of resources that currently might not be available. I have asked Education Scotland to consider the current arrangements, identify best practice and recommend whether further safeguards or guidance is required. I am explicitly not proposing a variant on the model proposed by Renfrewshire Council but want, at least initially, to see if we can build on existing practice."

The report outlines the background to the subsequent Education Scotland task; examines the educational context to the topic; explores the roles of external experts; and sets out a number of conclusions.

The term 'external experts' which was used in *Advancing Professionalism in Teaching* is not a term that has common currency in education in Scotland. However, it conveys a sense of the expertise which other colleagues and professionals may bring to the classroom, and it is used throughout this report.

Staff from Education Scotland, led by HM Inspectors, undertook this task. The fieldwork was undertaken between February and June 2012. Education Scotland liaised with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties (see Appendix A). We drew on a substantial body of evidence from school inspection activities and visits made to schools and local authorities by Education Scotland personnel. We discussed and received further information from a number of other schools. We also conducted a literature review on role of external experts in schools.

2. Background

Advancing Professionalism in Teaching: Report of the Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland (2011) made the following recommendation.

"The involvement of external experts in the delivery of teacher-led school education should be facilitated. Schools should be encouraged to draw on appropriately skilled individuals to enhance the learning of pupils. Headteachers should determine whether these individuals may work directly with a class on their own".

The report noted that "regular, structured involvement with groups such as sports specialists, college lecturers, university staff or local employers, brings additional dimensions to the education being provided to pupils". Central to the report's recommendation is the view that "it is critical to the successful development of a

pupil centred education system as envisaged through Curriculum for Excellence, that both primary and secondary schools make the best possible use of all the resources available to them” and that “empowering teachers to draw these additional resources to the classroom will help deliver a strong, diverse and pupil centred curriculum”. The report advocates a system where the teacher is very much the leader of learning, responsible for networking, planning and co-ordinating how other professionals contribute to a high quality learning experience for Scotland’s children and young people.

The nature of the curriculum in schools in Scotland is relevant to the place and involvement of external experts in schools in Scotland. *Building the Curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching* (2008) establishes a curriculum framework to meet the needs of all learners, 3-18. It defines the curriculum as “the totality of all that is planned for children and young people throughout their education”. The totality applies to four important contexts:

- ethos and life of the school as a community
- curriculum areas and subjects
- interdisciplinary learning
- opportunities for personal achievement.

Teachers lead the development and implementation of the curriculum. Others can contribute to all of the four contexts. *Building the Curriculum 1* (2006) is clear about the role of the teacher. It states that “the quality of learning and teaching in every classroom – and the inspiration, challenge and enjoyment which can come from teachers’ enthusiasm and commitment – will be critical to achieving our aspirations for all young people.”

Advice on Curriculum for Excellence is clear that the curriculum can best be delivered through partnership working. In planning and delivering a high quality education programme for all learners, teachers will look beyond their own expertise and resources and engage with, and harness the support and expertise of, external partners. *Building the Curriculum 3* states that “The term partners should be interpreted widely to include all those who can contribute to delivery of the experiences and outcomes and development of the four capacities”.

Teaching Scotland’s Future highlights that the two most important and achievable ways in which school education can realise the high aspirations Scotland has for its young people are through supporting and strengthening, firstly, the quality of teaching, and secondly, the quality of leadership. The report advocates an ‘extended professionalism’. In its response to *Teaching Scotland’s Future*, *Continuing to Build Excellence in Teaching*, the Scottish Government calls for excellence in teaching to be placed at the heart of Scottish education. *Teaching Scotland’s Future* makes clear that teachers should be supported in building their capacity and confidence to engage with a wide range of professionals to access high quality expertise and specialist knowledge which augments and complements the professionalism and expertise which already exists in our schools.

3. External Experts

Use of external experts by schools is widespread in Scotland. In a review of recent inspection evidence, reference is made to external experts and/or partners in almost all secondary school records of findings and in the majority of those from primary schools.

Teachers work with external experts in a wide range of well-established ways. The use of external partners to support children and young people with additional support needs, for instance, is normal practice. The deployment of college lecturers to deliver courses, either in school or in college, is common across Scotland. The Active Schools Programme has led to sports coaches often making a strong contribution to the curriculum. 'XL programmes' aimed at young people in secondary schools at risk of underachievement or exclusion are sometimes jointly delivered by teachers and staff from Community Learning. External experts such as these are trained, skilled practitioners whose daily work involves learning and teaching, albeit in a different environment. Many external experts are skilled professionals, used to working with young people in a range of learning contexts.

This report concentrates on one specific facet of the contribution of external experts: external experts working *alongside* teachers, in and beyond the school setting, to help deliver aspects of the curriculum and enhance the experiences, learning and achievement of children and young people. What these experts bring is usually a high degree of specific professional knowledge and specialist skills which teachers themselves may not have. External experts are not a substitute for the teacher as the lead professional in the classroom. Their role is to work alongside the teacher using their expert knowledge and skills to enhance the curriculum.

4. External Experts Working Alongside Teachers

Teachers work with external experts from a wide range of areas and disciplines and across almost all curriculum areas in order to help meet the needs of children and young people. Partnership working regularly involves contributions to a range of areas, including by health professionals and colleagues from the police and the fire and rescue service. Support from experts in these areas contributes to learning in curriculum areas such as health and wellbeing, as well as to personal and social education courses.

Various national initiatives, such as *Determined to Succeed (2002)*, have promoted and encouraged business involvement in the work of many schools. Links between schools and banks and credit unions have enhanced aspects of financial education. A few schools benefit from writers, artists and musicians in residence.

5. Role of the Teacher

External experts are a valuable resource to support teachers in delivering the curriculum. The class teacher is responsible for ensuring that this resource is used effectively, and children and young people derive maximum benefit. The contribution of the external expert works best as part of a planned, continuous experience based on appropriate preparation and effective follow-up activity. Teachers often report

that in sessions involving external experts they need to support the expert and the young people by encouraging participation as well as monitoring learning and progress to ensure all learners are motivated and engaged in the learning experience. In best practice, class teachers and external experts jointly evaluate sessions with children and young people and agree areas of success and possible improvement.

6. Planning

The contribution of external experts is most effective when there is appropriate planning, involving the class teacher and external expert. Effective planning takes account of what children and young people have learned previously and ensures that expectations are appropriately challenging. The following examples demonstrate the value of good planning.

In this first example, the teacher and external expert have planned a set of joint activities allowing young people to apply their knowledge and skills in a 'real life' situation.

In this secondary school, a physics teacher worked closely with local traffic police to develop course activities around forces, speed and equations of motion. A police officer now presents road crash investigations to various classes. This stimulates the use by young people of various equations to calculate car drivers' speed and distances. Police are also able to communicate road safety issues. The teacher is continuing to work with the police to improve the course which is now being used by other schools across the local authority.

This next example demonstrates how a strong commitment to ongoing joint planning resulted in a group of young people acquiring the necessary skills to take part in a theatre production.

In this special school for secondary pupils, staff and young people taking an interdisciplinary theatre arts course work in partnership with a local theatre. The partnership results in a contemporary dance production which is performed publically at the theatre. A partnership planning group meets regularly to coordinate activities. One year the lead person will be a member of the theatre staff and the next school staff. The school spends time sharing best practice with theatre staff for developing the skills of the young people. The class teacher works cooperatively with theatre staff. Overall, the learning experiences for the young people are significantly enhanced and they are provided with the opportunity of performing outwith their school.

Effective interdisciplinary learning requires careful planning. In this final example, interdisciplinary activities and courses based upon appropriate experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence are co-planned by the school and the external expert.

This secondary school has a range of curriculum components within the broad general education stage that all require working with external experts. These courses and challenges mainly of an interdisciplinary nature are co-planned between

the school and the external partner. Regular meetings are held to evaluate progress. The school is seeking to fully implement Curriculum for Excellence through designing various experiences and outcomes with the help of its external partners.

Many schools make informal, 'opportunistic' use of specialists to deliver a short talk, demonstration or workshop. This approach can serve an important purpose and very often adds to pupil enjoyment, motivation and to the ethos and life of the school as a community. This kind of stand-alone involvement tends not to be planned formally and involves minimal preparatory and follow up work. Though popular and often interesting for children and young people, this type of approach does not always maximise the impact of the external expert.

Use of the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence as part of the planning process with external experts is uneven. In general, links between the selected activities and the experiences and outcomes have been too superficial. At times, there can be a tendency to focus on pre-determined programmes that are activity-specific, rather than being designed to meet the identified group or individual needs of children and young people. There is a need to ensure that the contribution of external experts is planned in a way that helps all children and young people make progress in identified experiences and outcomes.

7. Training and learning

External experts have a wide range of knowledge and skills in their own specialist area. However, they need to know how best to deliver this expertise to a class of children and young people. Some organisations provide training for members of their staff who work in schools. This includes banks, disability agencies, arts organisations and many others. STEM Ambassadors, used by some schools to enhance and enrich the curriculum in the sciences, technologies, engineering and mathematics, also receive dedicated induction. This guidance, although helpful, can be generic in nature. Schools, as part of the planning process, need to ensure that external experts are thoroughly briefed by the class teacher beforehand. External experts need to be fully conversant with the learning objectives, the class/group attainment levels and relevant prior knowledge. Special schools, for example, recognise the need to provide experts with the skills necessary to support the learning of young people with additional, sometimes complex, needs. Awareness and knowledge of relevant expectations of Curriculum for Excellence varies amongst external partners. Many schools are already helping to develop the awareness of external partners of, for example, experiences and outcomes. It is important that this continues and develops.

8. Safeguarding

Schools have the responsibility to ensure that appropriate Criminal Record Checks are carried out for external experts who have unsupervised access to children and young people. They take their responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people extremely seriously. Risk assessments, if appropriate, are used. These are frequently developed jointly by the class teacher and the external expert.

9. Benefits for children and young people

There is evidence of clear benefits from the use of external experts. School staff are very positive about the benefits for young people resulting from well planned contributions by external experts, recognising that the contribution of external experts builds on and enhances learning led by teachers.

- External experts can bring valuable specialist knowledge to areas of the curriculum.

Teachers at this primary school work closely with the local Credit Union to support financial education. A representative from the Credit Union presents information at an assembly and works with children in classes on money problem solving activities during a financial education week. The representative also provides training for children involved in the running of the school bank. This expert brings background information and skills and helps children to see the relevance of learning about money and savings.

In many secondary schools, external experts, including health professionals, police, and fire and rescue staff, are often used to enhance learning in personal and social education. This enriches learners' experiences by allowing them to make links between work which is going on in their own community and what they are learning in class.

Primary school children also benefit from contributions made by health professionals.

This primary school uses a variety of health agencies to help develop life skills and health and wellbeing in preparing children in P7 for the transition to secondary school. Children come into contact with adults from beyond school for whom healthy lifestyles are important.

The Department for Education and Skills in England commissioned a *Literature Review on the Role of External Contributors in School Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Education (2004)*. This found that when "combined with teachers, external contributors can bring specialist knowledge and novelty, leading to high involvement and enjoyment for children".

- External experts can help place classroom learning in context and help young people to see the purpose and relevance of what they are doing.

A modern languages department works with a local hotel. Pupils visit the hotel and see how to welcome guests, the daily activities and the work skills involved. The hotel becomes a focus for language learning in the classroom. Young people also produce welcome brochures in French and German for use at the hotel.

Some schools use external experts to give young people more realistic contexts to practise job seeking skills.

A teacher and the school's careers adviser from Skills Development Scotland jointly deliver part of a careers programme. Young people are taken through the process of

completing an application form, discussing possible interview questions and then taking part in a mock interview. The interview is videoed allowing pupils to review their performance and note areas for improvement. This provides young people with valuable experience for the 'real thing'.

- Contributions from external experts support and often enhance high quality learning and teaching. For example,

A modern studies department runs a series of workshops with inputs from disability groups. Young people have responded very positively to these workshops. The event enhances and clarifies the issues learnt in class and engenders greater humility, empathy and understanding for people who have a disability. One young person said "It was much better than learning from a textbook. These are real people facing these scenarios explaining what it is like to have a disability".

- The use of external experts has widened the opportunities for young people to take part in real vocational experiences.

In one secondary school a Rural Skills course is based around crofting. The course is equally divided between classroom-based activities with a dedicated teacher, who also accompanies the young people on to the croft, and practical activities where the crofter acts as instructor. In another school, a teacher and a forest school leader jointly deliver a Rural Skills course. The forest school leader leads the outdoor practical work while the teacher helps support these sessions and reinforces the techniques that have been demonstrated.

In another two secondary schools, young people have had courses significantly enhanced through a link with a house building company. Staff from the building company work with young people both in school and on site. Learner confidence, skills development and problem solving abilities have greatly benefited from these experiences. Overall, it has improved pupil motivation to learn and prepare for the world of work.

- External experts can act as 'role models' and can support the personal and social development of pupils.

Some special schools regularly involve external experts, such as sports coaches, health professionals and theatre groups in the work of the school. These schools recognise that through working with external partners, children and young people can develop their social skills and enhance their confidence and self-esteem.

Occasionally, university students working with children can also help raise aspirations.

A group of university students and their tutors come to one primary school in a socially deprived area every year. They help develop children's skills in technology using a digital reading book and making short films illustrated through animation. The children are enthused by working with interested young adults. It also makes them aware of the possibilities of higher education.

Schools also use external experts to widen the range of courses offered, including rural skills, hospitality, construction and sports leadership. School-college partnerships expand opportunities for young people through providing a greater choice in the courses they can undertake at school and by involving them in different approaches to learning. This widens young people's opportunities for progression and helps support their transition to further learning, training or employment.

Working closely with universities, schools have been able to offer baccalaureate awards.

University lecturers support and mentor this school's candidates undertaking the interdisciplinary project for the Scottish Science Baccalaureate Award. The teacher provides in school support and keeps in close communication with the university on the progress of the student's research. University and school staff share the assessment of students.

10. Benefits for teacher

Contributions from external experts complement the work of the teacher and help to enhance high quality learning and teaching. Many teachers report that they derive significant professional development when working alongside external experts.

One all through school was able to fund a dance specialist for a whole session. This allowed dance to become an integral part of the physical education curriculum as well as a highly popular lunchtime and after school activity. Class teachers have been able to build their own knowledge of dance through both observation and joining in. This will allow the school to continue to offer dance opportunities for pupils in coming sessions.

Working with external experts also means that teachers are often learning from others, including in areas such as financial education.

An accountant delivers an interactive finance workshop for P7 children using a board game. The accountant has received training for working in schools through The Finance Education Partnership – the education training arm of the Chartered Institute of Banking. The session allows the class teacher to gain confidence and knowledge in personal finance that can be used in other lessons.

Working with external experts offers opportunities to develop other skills and experiences, including working with other professionals and, potentially, in aspects of leadership.

11. Benefits for school

The use of local external experts can help strengthen partnership links with and within the community, for the ultimate benefit of the young people and their community.

Children and teachers at a primary school worked with a wide range of external experts e.g. local historian, professional author, artist and sculptor, local

environmental agencies to enhance woodland footpaths and create artworks and story leaflets to be enjoyed by visitors and locals alike.

The xl course at this secondary school is jointly delivered by school and community learning and development (CLD) staff. This approach has built a bridge between the school and community and brought together informal and formal learning techniques. Teachers and CLD workers have undertaken joint CPD.

As well as helping to develop the curriculum of the school, involvement of experts can support the development of the ethos and life of the school as a community.

12. Benefits for external expert

External experts can also derive professional development from their involvement in schools, including becoming more aware of classroom practice. Many organisations are keen to make a contribution to the education of children and young people and the use of their staff as external experts helps to facilitate this.

13. Accessing external experts

Many external experts become involved in schools through the initiative of individual teachers or establishments. Some experts make the initial contact with schools. Others only work in local schools or schools in which they have known contacts. This can mean that some schools are not always able to engage external experts as a result, for example, of their location. Local authorities and business organisations often help to overcome this difficulty. The Active Schools Network, for example, is playing a very important facilitating role to ensure an equitable approach.

A special school for secondary young people with complex needs significantly enhances the curriculum offered through the engagement of various sports and dance coaches. All these inputs are facilitated by the Active Schools Coordinator who has the necessary contacts.

In good practice, schools show a strong commitment to partnership work, looking for opportunities, seizing them, and establishing, developing and maintaining relationships.

One secondary school has established a wide range of partnerships. A strong collegiate climate allows a range of staff to take responsibility and leadership for various partnerships. It is from these partnerships that inputs from external experts are accessed. These have greatly enhanced the curriculum experience for young people in this school. For example, business links have enriched work-related learning. Various courses have been enhanced e.g. police officers deliver lessons on terrorism to classes in modern studies, professional actors lead workshops for young people taking drama courses, native speakers work in German classes, the XL course is jointly delivered by the school and various agencies with the campus police officer playing an important part. The school also works closely with the Active Schools coordinator to gain access to sports coaches

14. Features of Good Practice

- Contributions by external experts are most effective where they are well planned and are part of a coherent experience for children and young people, linked to what they have learned before and extending it.
- Benefits for children and young people include: enabling them to engage with a wider range of ideas, techniques and real-life issues; learning how people such as engineers and scientists apply their learning; providing role models; making contributions to the development of knowledge, skills and attributes; motivation and engagement; and better preparation for the world of work.
- Within the broad general education, Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes are increasingly being used in the planning process.
- External experts make effective contributions when they are thoroughly briefed by the class teacher before their involvement.
- Joint evaluation after the learning episodes helps to highlight what has worked well and what can be done to improve experiences for children and young people in future.

15. Conclusions

- External experts represent a valuable resource which teachers can use to support the learning for children and young people. They are not a substitute for the professionalism of the teacher.
- External experts can make important contributions to children's experiences, their motivation and their engagement in learning.
- Current arrangements in the use of external experts in schools work well overall. There remains significant potential to increase and improve these contributions further.
- The contribution of external experts is most effective when there is an appropriate level of planning. During the period of the broad general education, the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence provide the framework for planning of activities.
- Many schools use experts in an informal, ad hoc way, based upon local and personal contacts.
- The involvement of external experts often depends largely on the initiative of individual teachers and schools. While local contacts are an important means of engagement, there is a need to ensure that all schools are aware of relevant resources and how to engage with them.
- As teachers become even more confident in implementing Curriculum for Excellence, they will be able to identify more clearly where external experts can make a valuable contribution to young people's learning.
- The senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence (S4–S6) offers potential for increasing the involvement of partners such as universities, colleges and community providers to enrich and extend the curriculum.
- External experts need to know how best to use their expertise in a class of children and young people. The teacher and external expert require to agree the approach to be taken and the expert needs to be briefed on areas such as the stages of development and progress of individuals and groups, and their prior knowledge.

- Joint evaluation of contributions needs to become a more consistent feature. Effective self-evaluation not only leads to improvement but also identifies clearly the impact on children's/young people's learning.
- Schools take their safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously when making use of external experts.
- Teachers value working alongside external experts and can derive significant professional benefit from doing so.
- *Advancing Professionalism in Teaching (2011)* and *Teaching Scotland's Future (2011)* recognise the need for teachers to develop the skills needed to engage with external partners/experts in ways that will lead to the greatest benefit for children and young people. This should be part of their career-long professional learning and where appropriate there should be joint professional learning activities.
- No further national guidance is required with regard to the involvement of external experts. However, it might be helpful to identify further examples of emerging and innovative practice, particularly based upon the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes.

16. Appendix A

In producing this report, Education Scotland liaised with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties. These include:

- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS)
- Teacher Professional Associations including the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), School Leaders Scotland (SLS) and the Association of Headteachers and Deputies Scotland (AHDS)
- National Parent Forum of Scotland