

# Primary School Curriculum: Case study of good practice

**Queensferry Primary School  
City of Edinburgh Council**

For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

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## 1. Context

Queensferry Primary School is a two stream non-denominational school in South Queensferry, near Edinburgh. Currently the school has 14 primary classes and two nursery classes.

The school sits in the shadow of the three bridges which cross the Firth of Forth. The school and local community are very proud of this unique setting, and have used an image of the Forth Rail Bridge to portray the school's curriculum framework.

In January 2016 the school received a very positive school inspection. Inspectors commented on "the broad, rich experiences across the curriculum and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) programmes that ensure children are making very good progress in their learning."

## 2. Curriculum rationale

Staff at Queensferry Primary School began creating their curriculum map in 2014. They wanted to create a bespoke curriculum map which would shape the school's rationale and the uniqueness of the school's context.

The rationale and aspirational vision and values were the starting point for the development of the school's curriculum framework. Created in consultation with all stakeholders, the rationale, vision and values have a focus on children's rights and wellbeing and provide a strong foundation on which to build the curriculum. Additionally, they highlight the commitment the school has to recognise the diversity within Queensferry and the historic and cultural aspects of the town.

In providing a strategic overview of the curriculum, staff recognised the importance of ensuring equity of opportunity and maximising the successes and achievements of all children. They underpinned their curriculum framework with the entitlements and four capacities of CfE. Staff wanted to ensure that:

- there was a clear focus on positive outcomes for all children at the centre of the curriculum;
- the purpose of the curriculum was explicit; and
- the curriculum enables all children to develop the four capacities of CfE.

## 3. Courses and programmes

In organising the school curriculum, staff aligned it closely to the four contexts of learning, as outlined in Building the Curriculum 3. This provides a structure to support the delivery of well-planned and progressive learning experiences across the school that incorporate all curriculum areas. The school's curriculum provides the opportunity to promote children's development and learning across a broad range of areas in order to develop their thinking and growth.

Staff, in consultation with stakeholders, have considered carefully the context of their school and decided which areas of the curriculum should be taught as discrete subjects. They have also created opportunities for children to learn, and to make links in their learning, through whole-school topics and opportunities for cross-stage learning. The school's planning documents have been developed to provide learning opportunities within the ethos and life of the school, and also children's personal and wider achievement. Significant focus is placed on children's personal and wider achievements and the school proactively plans opportunities to support, develop and celebrate achievement. This is done both within the school and by planning opportunities for children to share their achievements in the school community.

Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and digital literacy are experienced by all children across all curricular areas and staff take full account of this when planning.

The staff at Queensferry Primary School have created learning pathways for all curriculum areas. These focus upon the four contexts of learning and the flexibility for staff to be creative and innovative in how they deliver these pathways. When staff began this work, they realised that it was a considerable task to review all pathways for every aspect of the curriculum as well as looking at the totality of all of the learning experienced by children. Therefore, they continued to work with the programmes and courses they had been using previously, reviewing them in a planned timeline, over several years. This ensured children continued to experience a broad general education and that the task of reviewing learning pathways was manageable and achievable.

The principles of curriculum design are integral to the learning pathways at Queensferry. For example, progression is supported by effective transition arrangements from stage to stage. A strong culture of collaborative planning ensures staff have a good knowledge and understanding of a children's progress and next steps. Additionally, breadth and depth are planned through well-structured programmes and forward planning. These are shared termly with parents and children so they have the relevant information to support learning out with school. Learning walls are used in all classes to offer opportunities for children to make choices about and personalise their learning.

Due consideration has been given also to cross cutting themes like enterprise, citizenship, sustainable development and creativity. The organisation of the school's curriculum allows for these to be developed in a range of contexts. Learning from these themes is built into the experiences and outcomes across curriculum areas. This approach reduces the need for layers of planning across the curriculum.

The school has developed effective partnerships to support curriculum development which result in positive outcomes for children. For example, working closely with a published children's author, who became the school's patron of reading, offered a very engaging way of encouraging children to see the value and purpose of learning to read. Additionally, a close working relationship with a local theatre offers primary seven children the opportunity to prepare and present their end of year show, whilst highlighting the real-life relevance of learning in the expressive arts.

In developing their curriculum, school staff have worked to create an agreed approach to learning for sustainability. Initially, every child in the school was a member of a whole-school committee. This included a citizen group and a pupil voice committee. During an evaluation of this approach, staff and pupils felt the groups were too large and the purpose of each group had become unclear. As such, arrangements were reviewed and there is now an increased number of groups across the school. As well as a reinstated pupil council and eco group, these include a group with a particular learning and teaching focus and a health and wellbeing committee. These groups are now directly related to the work of the school, and pupils feel they have more of an active part to play in decisions being made about their school and local community.

#### 4. Interdisciplinary learning (IDL)

Teaching staff at Queensferry have a strong working knowledge of the experiences and outcomes. They embrace the opportunity of being able to package the experiences and outcomes in different ways appropriate to the individual child or class. This flexibility allows staff to involve children meaningfully in decisions about the planning of learning and how it will be delivered.

Given their context and the school rationale, the learning pathways at Queensferry include a particular emphasis on Scottish contexts, cultures and history. For example, each year the school hosts a Burns Supper as part of a wider celebration of Scots Language. The school also plays an active part in the local community. Older pupils conduct a Queensferry heritage trail, leading tours and telling other pupils and their families about the town of Queensferry. The school played a very active part in the opening of the new Queensferry Crossing in 2017 and embraced the learning opportunities this offered. This was celebrated in school and in news stories in the local, national and international press. These experiences help children learn about their own town and their place in the wider world.

## 5. Skills for learning, life and work

Skills for learning, life and work are promoted across the curriculum at Queensferry Primary School. The school's values are all related to the skills that children will need in the workplace. Children are actively encouraged to work hard and do their very best.

The school aims to offer a progressive programme of experiences about the world of work. This helps children learn about employment and develop a range of skills which they will use throughout their life and work. These skills are developed across the curriculum and enhanced through school and real life experiences.

The 'World of Work' programme is delivered in a variety of ways, including play experiences in the nursery, inviting parents of primary three pupils to talk about their jobs and the organisation of a variety of 'World of Work' workshops in primaries five and six. In primary seven, children work closely with a local college. They are asked to consider a range of courses and then apply for one of them by writing a personal statement. A day is then spent in the college experiencing the chosen course. This gives children the opportunity to reflect on the skills and interests they have which could be applied to life beyond school.

Over many years, the school has developed positive relationships with business and community partners. These include close links with a local supermarket, theatre, the local Park Ranger, and Further Education (FE) college. Experiences are provided which bring the world of work into the school or by providing opportunities in the community and workplace. Partners provide children with a variety of role models. They support children in becoming more aware of the wide and ever-expanding range of career opportunities available to them.

Where relevant in the school's curriculum, links are made to financial education which provides children with an understanding of the benefits and responsibilities which come from earning money and budgeting. The school organises input from a local business to provide a progressive programme of financial awareness workshops for children across the school.

## 6. Next Steps

School staff are committed to working with their stakeholders to continue to review their curriculum regularly. Consideration will be given to local and national guidance, and agreed changes will be made, as appropriate to the context of the school and its community. Currently, staff are refreshing their health and wellbeing framework to consider more fully the well-being indicators. They are also adopting a whole school approach to nurture, and planning for progressive learning experiences in food and health. Further plans include developing and implementing progressive science, technologies, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and into the school's curriculum

framework. This will enhance work the school is already doing as part of its focus on the Developing the Young Workforce agenda.

The curriculum at Queensferry Primary has strong connections to its community. As a result, stakeholders are keen to ensure the curriculum continues to reflect as fully as possible these strong relationships and links. They want to ensure the school capitalises on these and that they continue to be a core element of the school's curriculum model.

## 7. Conclusion

Staff, in consultation with stakeholders, have created a more bespoke curriculum through which exciting, engaging and relevant teaching and learning can take place. They reflect regularly on their curriculum framework to ensure it allows learning, attainment and achievement to be maximised. Revised local and national guidance is considered and, if required, changes are made to the school's curriculum framework.

The headteacher believes that the on-going review of the school's curriculum creates a strong framework. It provides a continued focus on offering children the best learning experiences and outcomes. Robust self-evaluation and reflection ensure the curriculum remains dynamic and meets the needs of all learners at Queensferry Primary School.

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