

Learning for Sustainability

The Scottish Government's response to the Report of the One Planet Schools Working Group

March 2013

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Ministerial foreword

Scotland has a distinguished history and international reputation recognised by UNESCO and others for sustainable development education, global citizenship and outdoor learning, which are firmly embedded within Curriculum for Excellence. Learning for sustainability encompasses all of these themes and approaches and sets out recommendations to build on successful practice in Scotland. The approach being recommended complements the General Teaching Council Scotland's new Professional Standards which affirm the importance of values and learning for sustainability.

I am very appreciative of the careful consideration and hard work of the members of the One Planet Schools Working Group, chaired by Professor Pete Higgins, in preparing the Learning for Sustainability report and would also like to acknowledge all those who have informed the Scottish Government's consideration of the response to the report.

As we approach the end of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and celebrate the Year of Natural Scotland, it is timely that we take a strategic approach to build on successful practice and help ensure that great learning for sustainability which helps young people develop as responsible global citizens is the experience of all.

Learning for Sustainability provides a strategic agenda which needs leadership at all levels to remove barriers and enable a coherent whole school approach that encompasses the curriculum, campus, culture and community of the school.

As the report makes clear, it does not ask anything of educators that is not already implied by Curriculum for Excellence, the new GTCS Professional Standards and Teaching Scotland's Future which set the direction for professional learning.

I am pleased to welcome the report and, on behalf of the Scottish Government, accept all the recommendations, almost all in full. A Learning for Sustainability Implementation Group will be established in collaboration with the new Regional Centre for Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development and a range of partners to drive forward the recommendations on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Dr Alasdair Allan
Minister for Learning, Sciences and Scotland's Languages

Introduction

Learning for Sustainability, the report of the One Planet Schools Working Group was published on 17 December 2012. The Group, chaired by Professor Pete Higgins, was established by Scottish Ministers to take forward a 2011 manifesto commitment:

“We welcome proposals for the creation of One Planet schools, and will look at ways of developing this concept. This will include action to continue the development of professional standards around sustainability education and leadership within our schools on environmental issues”.

The approach recommended supports a whole-school approach, encompassing the curriculum, campus, culture and community of the school and is intended to complement and strengthen wider changes in education.

Language around learning for sustainability is consistent with the new GTCS professional standards and highlights the value of a holistic approach to sustainable development, global citizenship and outdoor learning. The Group has defined Learning for Sustainability as:

A whole school approach that enables the school and its wider community to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and take decisions which are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society.

The report contains 31 recommendations, including 5 overarching recommendations, which cover the main sections of the report. Those sections relate to learners, practitioners, a whole-school approach, school estates and policies and developing a strategic national approach:

1. All learners should have an entitlement to learning for sustainability
2. In line with the new GTCS Professional Standards, every practitioner, school and education leader should demonstrate learning for sustainability in their practice
3. Every school should have a whole school approach to learning for sustainability that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels
4. School buildings, grounds and policies should support learning for sustainability
5. A strategic national approach to supporting learning for sustainability should be established

In informing the Scottish Government's response, we are grateful to all those who have contributed and recognise the importance of ensuring that developments in education are taken forward in a way which is mindful of capacity and resourcing pressures as well as opportunities.

Summary response

All of the recommendations have been accepted – almost all in full – as the Scottish Government supports the ambition and potential to build on Scotland’s excellent track record in areas of sustainability, global citizenship and outdoor learning.

The entitlement to learning for sustainability complements the purpose of Curriculum for Excellence and sends a clear message that in the context of the broad general education and the totality of children and young people’s experience through their education, sustainability and developing as responsible global citizens should be an expectation for all.

This is not a new demand on teachers and is consistent with Curriculum for Excellence and work to improve the full spectrum of teacher education further to the recommendations of the Teaching Scotland’s Future including the new GTCS professional standards.

Sustainability and global citizenship are embedded in the experiences and outcomes and outdoor learning has been promoted consistently and strategically as an approach to learning. Young people can develop skills, confidence, knowledge, attitudes and values through learning for sustainability which help equip them for jobs and life. A growing body of research points to benefits for health and wellbeing as well as motivation and attainment and it is important to take forward education with a strong commitment to fairness, equity and social justice with responsibility for our social, economic and environmental impact.

There are a variety of existing programmes and resources to support Learning for Sustainability such as Eco-Schools and Rights Respecting Schools as well as support through local authorities, the work of the GTCS, Education Scotland, Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage and other governmental and non-governmental organisations. The Scottish Government has also committed funding to co-finance EU development education projects being delivered by Scotland’s Development Education Centres.

A whole school approach, with leadership is at all levels, is key and the Scottish Government supports the approach recommended and looks forward to working with partners to support implementation. The Learning for Sustainability Implementation Group will have a key role in taking forward and supporting progress on the recommendations and making connections with the work of the National Implementation Board on teacher education, support for the new GTCS professional standards and the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence.

The Learning for Sustainability Implementation Group will be formally established in the coming months and will involve strong collaboration between the Scottish Government, the Regional Centre for Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development (who represent wide range of non-governmental organisations) and partners including Education Scotland, the GTCS, ADES, SQA, representatives of local authorities and teachers as well as establishing arrangements for wider engagement. To support the work of the Implementation Group in taking forward the report some additional funding has been identified and this will be kept under review.

Response to recommendations of Learning for Sustainability

Recommendation	Response
<p>1 All learners should have an entitlement to learning for sustainability</p>	<p>Accept Within Curriculum for Excellence, all children and young people are entitled to a curriculum that includes a range of opportunities and experiences at different stages of learning. These include a coherent curriculum, a broad general education, a senior phase, skills for learning life and work and positive destinations. An entitlement to learning for sustainability is supported and can be further strengthened within these entitlements, through the development of the four capacities, themes and approaches to learning across the curriculum and opportunities for personal development. Education Scotland will consider, with input from the Implementation Group, guidance and communications to support this.</p>
<p>1.1 As part of this entitlement, outdoor learning should be a regular, progressive curriculum-led experience for all learners</p>	<p>Accept Outdoor learning is a key approach to learning within the curriculum and practitioners are encouraged to make outdoor learning a natural and normal part of practice. The frequency with which outdoor learning activities take place in schools should be determined by the needs of the curriculum and learners. The Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Implementation Group should consider an appropriate and proportionate means of capturing practice.</p>
<p>1.2 As part of this entitlement, learners should have opportunities within their curricular experiences to engage with democratic processes and to connect and contribute to their communities, locally, nationally and internationally, as active global citizens.</p>	<p>Accept Supporting young people to develop as politically literate, responsible, active global citizens is a key principle of the curriculum. This should be supported by the development of resources and professional development opportunities, led by Education Scotland.</p>
<p>1.3 As part of this entitlement, learners should have active curricular learning experiences that develop their understanding of the inter-relationship of environment, society, economy and inequity, of the ecological limits to development and the interdependence of ecological and human wellbeing.</p>	<p>Accept Supporting young people to develop as environmentally aware, active global citizens is a key principle of the curriculum. This should be supported by the development of resources and professional development opportunities, led by Education Scotland.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p>1.4 The Scottish Government and Education Scotland should put in place mechanisms to determine how well the learning for sustainability entitlement of learners is being met.</p>	<p>Accept Arrangements are in place to evaluate progress on Curriculum for Excellence and the four capacities, which will include some evidence relating to learning for sustainability. Education Scotland's curriculum impact reports also provide snapshots of practice as demonstrated by recent reports on Science and Social Studies, which featured strong evidence on aspects of learning for sustainability. Education Scotland is considering a curriculum impact report relating to learning for sustainability themes.</p>
<p>2 In line with the new GTCS Professional Standards, every practitioner, school and education leader should demonstrate learning for sustainability in their practice.</p>	<p>Accept Learning for sustainability has been embedded within the suite of Professional Standards that will become effective from August 2013. Guidance, resources and support will be provided by GTCS, Education Scotland and partners to build capacity and confidence among practitioners and leaders in the new Standards. The Professional Review and Development (PRD) process should be the vehicle through which teachers have dialogue with line managers about their practice and professional learning, taking account of the Standards.</p>
<p>2.1 Education Scotland, in partnership with key stakeholders, should continue to develop a coordinated national strategy for professional learning and peer collaboration relating to learning for sustainability and accomplished teaching.</p>	<p>Accept Education Scotland is taking a lead role in promoting a strategic approach to professional learning, which supports the implementation of Teaching Scotland's Future. This includes close working with local authorities and support for strategic priorities, which are expected to include learning for sustainability given its status in the new Standards. In addition, the LfS Implementation Group will include Education Scotland and will work the work of the National Implementation Board which is providing strategic lead on professional learning.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p>2.2 Learning for sustainability should be included in the self-evaluation of all practitioners, school and education leaders through the Professional Review and Development (PRD) process.</p>	<p>Accept Learning for sustainability has been embedded within the suite of Professional Standards to support teachers in actively embracing and promoting principles and practices of sustainability in all aspects of their work. The Professional Review and Development (PRD) process provides an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice, encompassing learning for sustainability themes and evaluate their practice against the relevant Standard.</p>
<p>2.3 Under National Partnership Group Proposal 9, Education Scotland should include learning for sustainability in the online resources produced to support effective PRD.</p>	<p>Accept Guidance on PRD is being prepared by Education Scotland in partnership with other organisations and this will be made available in spring 2013. Online resources to support effective PRD should reflect the place of learning for sustainability.</p>
<p>2.4 In line with the new GTCS Professional Standards, learning for sustainability is a core responsibility of every teacher educator and a programme of professional learning and peer collaboration relating to learning for sustainability for teacher education should be established.</p>	<p>Accept GTCS are responsible for accreditation of all courses of initial teacher education and this includes satisfying themselves that the staff involved in course delivery are appropriately qualified and equipped to do so.</p>
<p>2.5 Learning for sustainability should be embedded in the GTCS's frameworks and procedures for programme validation and revalidation.</p>	<p>GTCS accepted.</p>
<p>3 Every school should have a whole school approach to learning for sustainability that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels.</p>	<p>Accept A whole school approach to learning for sustainability is vital. Education Scotland and partners will continue to support and promote the adoption of a whole school approach through professional learning programmes, publications and resources.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p>3.1 Education Scotland, in partnership with stakeholders and other education bodies, should develop resources, guidance and support for schools, and those that support them, to enable schools to develop a whole school approach and self-evaluate the progress they are making towards implementing this approach. See also 5.4</p>	<p>Accept National guidance on self-evaluation of schools and reflection tools on global citizenship and outdoor learning strengthen the place of learning for sustainability within schools. Consideration will be given to future resources, guidance and support to reflect these developments.</p>
<p>3.2 A national strategy should be developed to build the capacity of school leaders in establishing and sustaining a whole school approach to learning for sustainability. See also 5.8</p>	<p>Accept The National Implementation Board is currently overseeing a project that will establish the Scottish College of Educational Leadership. It is envisaged that the College, once established, will take a strategic view of leadership development and issues such as this should be considered by the new body. Education Scotland will work with the college and other partners to consider how to maximise the opportunities through the Leadership Framework for leadership development in relation to learning for sustainability.</p>
<p>3.3 Scottish Government, ADES and CoSLA should encourage local authorities to maintain high expectations in relation to learning for sustainability and the adoption of a whole school approach.</p>	<p>Accept The LfS Implementation Group will work with national partners to support this.</p>
<p>4 All school buildings, grounds and policies should support learning for sustainability</p>	<p>Accept The Scottish Government's national school building programme, Scotland's Schools for the Future is already in part delivering this aspiration and will continue through to the end of 2017/18. Benefits and lessons learned are being embraced by local authorities and rolled across the school estate where appropriate. For new and existing school estates, many local authorities have developed outdoor learning strategies which support the development of school grounds and have taken concerted action to improve the energy efficiency of the school estate.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p>4.1 Every learner should have the opportunity for contact with nature in their school grounds on a daily basis and throughout the seasons through the provision of thoughtfully developed green space for outdoor learning and play.</p>	<p>Accept Every school should be encouraged to utilise their school estate to support contact with nature. The frequency should be driven by the needs of the curriculum and learners.</p>
<p>4.2 The Scottish Government should develop a framework to ensure that local authority school estate management proactively develops campuses that support learning for sustainability.</p>	<p>Accept The joint CoSLA/Scottish Government school estate strategy sets out the aspirations for Scotland's school estate. Among those aspirations is the desire for a sustainable school estate whose design, construction and operation is environmentally and energy efficient. The school estate should contribute directly to year on year reductions in greenhouse gas emissions introduced by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, be resilient to the impact of climate change and lead by example in matters of environmental performance. The role of School Estate Management Plans is significant and the importance will be taken forward through on-going engagement with all local authorities.</p>
<p>4.3 Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) release of Scottish Government funding for new schools should be conditional on submission of a strategic design brief that meets the guiding principles of Building Better Schools.</p>	<p>Accept As part of the Schools for the Future Programme, projects must demonstrate to the Scottish Government and the SFT how all nine guiding principles of Building Better Schools are met. Each project is also designed in accordance with the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM).</p>
<p>4.4 The principles outlined in any users' guides for the sustainability labelling scheme should be adopted for existing school estates.</p>	<p>Accept As part of the forthcoming Scottish Government's Sustainability Labelling for new schools, a non-technical users guide is being prepared which will allow pupils, teachers and other school occupants a greater understanding on controlling their internal environment in an energy efficient manner. The broad principles of this document could be adopted for existing schools.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p>4.5 The Scottish Government should commission a study to identify PPP schools that have been able to significantly develop their campuses to support learning for sustainability and to identify principles that would support the process of change in other PPP schools.</p>	<p>Accept Local authorities have a key role and the Learning for Sustainability Implementation Group should work with the ADES Resources Committee, which includes key individuals responsible for managing the school estate across Scotland, to identify and examine available information and examples of good practice in management of PPP schools to inform the scope of a future study. It is recognised that due to the contractual relationships relating to PPP schools, some local authorities and schools have scope to influence practice more than others.</p>
<p>5 A strategic national approach to supporting learning for sustainability should be established</p>	<p>Accept The report provides a strategic agenda to enable a step change to happen. To ensure a coherent and coordinated approach, the establishment of the LfS Implementation Group is required to take forward the report and its recommendations.</p>
<p>5.1 The Scottish Government should ensure a coherent approach across Directorates in relation to learning for sustainability.</p>	<p>Accept Building on existing links within the Divisions and Directorates of the Scottish Government, awareness of the report and recommendations will be maintained among relevant staff.</p>
<p>5.2 The Scottish Government should convene a National Implementation Group to drive forward the recommendations of this report, to encourage research on the relationship between learning for sustainability and key educational performance indicators, and to monitor and evaluate progress and impact.</p>	<p>Accept The Group and potential sub-groups, will be established to take forward the report and its recommendations. This will be taken forward in collaboration with Scotland's newly established Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development.</p>
<p>5.3 Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority should identify learning for sustainability as a key organisational priority which is reflected in their corporate strategies and work plans.</p>	<p>Accept Education Scotland and SQA have already taken steps to embed learning for sustainability into their corporate plans, strategies and workstreams. Further consideration will be given to explore the possibility of making it an organisational priority within its both organisations.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p>5.4 Education Scotland, through the inspection process and other functions, should further encourage a whole school approach to learning for sustainability.</p>	<p>Accept Education Scotland has consistently promoted the concept of a whole school approach through all of its professional learning activities and has given significant profile to learning for sustainability within the curriculum impact reports for sciences and social studies. Further consideration will be given by Education Scotland as to other opportunities for promoting whole school approaches within forthcoming resources and developments.</p>
<p>5.5 Education Scotland should consider undertaking an aspect review on learning for sustainability.</p>	<p>Accept A full programme of curriculum impact reviews is currently underway. Education Scotland will consider how best to take forward curriculum impact reviews relating to learning for sustainability themes within the current programme.</p>
<p>5.6 The Scottish Qualifications Authority should further embed learning for sustainability within the new qualifications.</p>	<p>Accept SQA recognises the role that qualifications play in raising awareness and deepening understanding of the need to focus on learning for sustainability. A greater emphasis on skills, on flexibility and on personalisation and choice has been central to the development of the new National Qualifications. This approach enhances the opportunities to promote the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and take decisions which are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society and the qualifications will continue to be developed with this approach in mind.</p>
<p>5.7 Learning for sustainability should be identified as a key priority for professional learning by the Teaching Scotland's Future National Implementation Board.</p>	<p>Accept in principle National Implementation Board has been charged with publishing key priorities for teacher learning and issues related to sustainability will be considered as part of this process.</p>
<p>5.8 The College for Educational Leadership should identify learning for sustainability as a key organisational priority.</p>	<p>Accept in principle Once established, the Scottish College for Educational Leadership will identify the key aspects of leadership development needed across the sector. If appropriate, this will include sustainability as a priority area of learning.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p>5.9 The National Implementation Group should seek to work closely with the UN University accredited Scottish 'Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development' on research and innovation.</p>	<p>Accept The Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development offers a unique opportunity to support research and innovation associated with learning for sustainability. The LfS Implementation Group will give consideration as to how best to work in partnership with the Regional Centre of Expertise to take forward shared objectives.</p>