

This briefing provides advice for practitioners and can also be used to inform partners, learners and their parents in taking forward Curriculum for Excellence.

CfE Briefing ⁹

Learning about Scotland

Scottish education is going through a period of transformation that will affect all learners. Approaches to the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment, awards and qualifications are all changing. Education Scotland is supporting change by evaluating evolving practice and sharing it nationally to inform discussion and promote innovation. This briefing explores the ways in which practitioners across sectors are increasing opportunities for children and young people to learn about Scotland as part of the Broad General Education (BGE) and in the Senior Phase.

“Children and young people are entitled to a broad general education... Throughout this broad curriculum it is expected there will be an emphasis on Scottish contexts, Scottish cultures and Scotland’s history and place in the world. This planning should demonstrate the principles for curriculum design; challenge and enjoyment; breadth; progression; depth; personalisation and choice; coherence; relevance.”

Building the Curriculum 3 (BtC3)

March 2013

Learning about Scotland is a particularly effective context for successful interdisciplinary learning.

1. What is Learning about Scotland?

Embedded both explicitly and implicitly in Curriculum for Excellence, it is an entitlement for children and young people to learn about Scotland's cultures, people, history, achievements and languages, thereby connecting Scotland with its place in the world – past and present – as well as its natural heritage and landscape. It's the kind of learning that underpins a real understanding of Scotland and helps inform an understanding of current and future issues as they emerge. It often begins at the early stage of the BGE through learners' natural curiosity about their local environment, continues throughout subsequent levels, perhaps leading to the option of undertaking an SQA Award in Scottish Studies, and beyond developing to be a lifelong interest. Learning about Scotland is a particularly effective context for successful interdisciplinary learning, providing opportunities for linking experiences and outcomes (Es and Os) and applying learning coherently across the curriculum. It gives children and young people the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of Scotland and to explore issues, solve problems and reflect on the country in which they live and how it relates to the rest of the world.

How well do you understand the breadth and purposes of Learning about Scotland?

2. What does Learning about Scotland look like and how is it planned?

Effective practice in Learning about Scotland is evolving in a number of ways. It often takes the forms of:

- projects or thematic studies;

- local, national and international studies, including comparative studies;
- outdoor learning through engaging with places and spaces of local and national significance, including local heritage, history, monuments and green areas;
- use of inspiring Scottish scientists, entrepreneurs, innovators and artists to engage learners and develop a range of skills for life and work;
- learning Scotland's languages, their contexts and their heritage, and using Scottish texts to develop literacy through an understanding of Scotland;
- wide-ranging cultural experiences and learning in the expressive arts; and
- interest-led studies through a Scottish context, which may include any of the above.

An approach that is evolving well uses a Scottish theme and/or question to develop knowledge and understanding about Scotland through two or more curriculum areas. This approach makes an effective contribution to the breadth, depth and application of learning when the curriculum areas link together naturally – real connections that make learning more relevant. This approach can be particularly engaging when it links directly with the day-to-day experiences of the learners, is led by them, and is based in the local community.

Another related approach is to focus on the main Scottish aspects within one curriculum area by exploring, for example, the impact that key people, key inventions, innovations and exports have had on the world.

Specific Es and Os from different levels of CfE and key aspects from the associated Principles and Practice paper underpin this approach. It will have a specific intention to develop knowledge and skills in the curriculum area, including those needed for learning, life and work. Of course, features of the various approaches, detailed above, might also be combined in other ways.

Learning about Scotland can be particularly rewarding when it uses opportunities in the local community, perhaps building from local contexts and experiences, to develop an understanding of how these relate to Scotland's place in the world. This approach encourages depth in learning and can promote important skills. For example, learners might investigate the arrival of a multi-national business in their local area, its impact on jobs for local people, its contribution to the Scottish economy, and then its influence around the world. Whatever the context,

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however, when planning learning about Scotland, practitioners might find it helpful to prepare by:

- talking to learners and their parents, colleagues and members of the community in order to identify local contexts for learning, perhaps including historical and geographical events, and then scoping initial plans with them;
- identifying the curriculum area(s) and specific Es and Os which will be used;
- exploring with learners and specifying a few 'big ideas' or problems to be solved;
- identifying the key knowledge and understanding, skills (including higher-order thinking skills), attributes and capabilities that the learning will promote; and
- planning assessment of the learning, including by working out with learners themselves how they will best be able to show what they have learned, using approaches that match the way learning took place.

How effectively do you plan learning which links local, national and international perspectives?

3. What is the role of Outdoor Learning?

Scotland's landscapes provide excellent opportunities for enriched learning outdoors. Learning about Scotland aims to encourage learners and teachers to engage with these opportunities by taking learning outside. The varied outdoor places in a locality provide real and meaningful opportunities for deepening learners' understanding about themselves, creating a connection with local

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people and communities and for appreciating the uniquely Scottish aspects of architecture and design, monuments and homes. It is only through engaging with what is around us that we can compare and contrast with other areas of Scotland and other countries. Learning to be active and to contribute happens readily in real-life, real-world contexts where learners develop their skills alongside people in communities locally, nationally and internationally. Learning about Scotland through the outdoors can also give opportunities for important learning about how Scotland is part of a wider world, perhaps through science and health and wellbeing Es and Os. For example, by planting, growing and eating food in a sustainable way, and comparing with how this is done in different countries, learners can gain first-hand experience of bio-diversity and the challenges food providers face around the world.

Our local environments have a unique richness which reflects local history and how our communities have developed. This is a valuable local resource accessible to all. Further afield, our two National Parks – Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and Cairngorms – and other areas of designated landscape such as our National Nature Reserves, estates and parklands, provide important outdoor learning opportunities, sometimes supported by rangers. These experiences fully promote CfE by combining, for example, learning about landscapes, wildlife and habitats in Scotland with developing an understanding of and connection to wild places, and by exploring how Scotland can best conserve and manage the demands on such valuable resources.

How effectively do you use the outdoors to provide contexts for Learning about Scotland?

Scotland's landscapes provide excellent opportunities for enriched learning outdoors.

4. What role do Scotland's languages have in Learning about Scotland?

Gaelic and Scots are integral parts of Scotland's heritage and cultural life. They have a vital part to play in children's learning about Scotland and help to improve literacy alongside English and other languages. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 gave Gaelic status as an official language of Scotland. Scots is recognised as a language in its own right by the Scottish and UK Governments and by the European Union. As such, it is important that children have an understanding and informed view of why these languages are promoted to help them survive. Many children benefit from learning through the medium of Gaelic and gain from all of the benefits of bilingualism. Others learn Gaelic as a second language, often alongside another European language. To appreciate Gaelic and Scots and to develop respect for them and their speakers, it is recommended that, where possible, children have an opportunity to learn Gaelic and develop an appreciation of Scots language, including an understanding of the historical and contemporary aspects of these languages.

What access do your learners have to Scotland's languages?

5. Identifying Opportunities for Learning about Scotland

Practitioners have always had a keen eye for using local opportunities to inspire learners, to contextualise learning and to make it more relevant.

Over the next few years, major international sporting events such as the **Commonwealth Games** and **The Ryder Cup** will provide an opportunity to focus on Scotland's place in the world. Historical events such as the 100th anniversary of the **First World War** and the 700th anniversary of the **Battle of Bannockburn** can be used as starting points for deeper study. The opening of infrastructure projects such as the **Edinburgh Trams**, the new **Forth Crossing**, and, in Dundee, the **Victoria and Albert Museum**, provide rich sources for inter-disciplinary learning. Other events such as this year's **Year of Natural Scotland**, and in 2014 the **Year of Homecoming** and the **Referendum** provide opportunities to enrich learning through a focus on Learning about Scotland.

How effectively do you use contemporary contexts to inspire learning across the curriculum?

6. What next?

In taking forward improvements in the BGE and Senior Phase, it is important for schools to have a clear understanding of the profile of Learning about Scotland, both across the totality of the curriculum and in specific curriculum areas and subjects. In doing this, practitioners may find it helpful to reflect on the following questions as well as the themes developed within this briefing.

- How well embedded is Learning about Scotland in the curriculum at all stages?
- How well do you work with parents, the local community and

other partners to provide contexts for Learning about Scotland?

- How effectively do you look ahead to identify inspiring opportunities to enrich learning through contemporary events?
- How readily can learners at different stages explain and reflect upon their Learning about Scotland?

Other useful links

You may find it helpful to explore **www.educationscotland.gov.uk** for further information about the support that Education Scotland is developing for Learning about Scotland, including the above contexts. You could, for example, register for **Game On Scotland** and join the national education programme based on the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

All children can learn Gaelic using the resource, LanguageNutz **http://www.languagenutz.com/sco/**. Resources to help children learn about the cultural and contemporary aspects of Gaelic are available at **www.educationscotland.gov.uk/studyingScotland**. Further information about Scots can be found on the Knowledge of Language online resource at: **http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/knowledgeoflanguage/scots/index.asp**

Information on the Scottish Studies Working Group is available at: **http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE/ScottishStudies**