

PROGRESS IN PREPARING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

From mid-March to the end of April, Education Scotland (ES) carried out an audit with Education Authorities (EAs) in order to provide an update on the support required to ensure the effective introduction of new National Qualifications (NQs) and associated changes to curriculum structures in publicly-funded secondary schools. District Inspectors held interviews with each of the Directors of Education and their senior managers to discuss the position in each Authority. The information from the interviews was set alongside evidence derived from recent inspections and other visits by ES staff to schools in the area.

Key findings

- 1. Overall, almost all secondary schools are making good progress in preparing for delivery and implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.**
The majority of schools are well advanced in making their plans for the Senior Phase and are preparing to implement a range of models and options in collaboration with partners. In other EAs, schools' preparation for the Senior Phase is at an earlier stage. Encouragingly, approaches to tracking learners' progress through the Broad General Education and into the Senior Phase are under active development in almost all schools.
- 2. There is a clear understanding that the next two years are a period in which schools' curriculum planning and structures will evolve progressively.**
Currently, a variety of new curriculum models for the Broad General Education and the Senior Phase are emerging as schools design approaches to meet the needs of their particular pupil and parent communities. In the majority of schools, curriculum structures are changing so that, while pupils may have increasing opportunities for making choices and options at prior stages, they will make formal subject choices for NQs during S3. Some schools however, are currently continuing to offer subject choice committing pupils at the end of S2 to a range of NQ courses concluding in S4. It is clear that close dialogue is proceeding between EAs and their schools on these issues and that schools will make further changes to their curriculum structures over the next year or two. Some schools need further support from EAs and, where necessary, also from national bodies, to support them in developing course structures aligned to pupils' needs and aspirations.
- 3. Schools are engaging well with a range of key stakeholders in developing curriculum plans and structures.** Most schools are engaging parents with the development of the curriculum, particularly in relation to the Senior Phase, for instance through the use of parent information evenings and sessions or the

active involvement of parent representative bodies. Some schools have developed very successful approaches through which pupils' views can influence the development of the curriculum although further improvement is still required.

4. **Overall, secondary schools are making good progress in their preparation for the new NQs, and are on track to implement them within the national timescale without invoking exceptional circumstances.** With the exception of East Renfrewshire, no EA identified any whole school that would be seeking a delay in the introduction of new NQs. It was also the case that the audit did not identify any individual departments which had requested delay through the exceptional circumstances arrangements. However, a few EAs identified a small number of individual departments where there had been limited progress on implementation to date. In these cases, further dialogue is ongoing between the departments, the school and the EA.
5. **While progress is generally good, it is clear that some departments will need more support to help them prepare effectively for the new NQs.** This was particularly the case where departments had been reluctant to progress curriculum development work on the basis of draft materials from the SQA. Support will also be required in some schools with small or single-teacher departments, where the staff resource to plan and develop new courses is inevitably more limited. The majority of schools reported that they were keenly anticipating the provision of further information about courses and assessment but noted the need for staff to have sufficient time to review this information in detail as they planned course provision.

Other areas where additional support was requested included:

- elements of the Sciences, Health and Wellbeing, Expressive Arts, Mathematics and Technologies;
 - the articulation between the new National Qualifications and the Experiences and Outcomes;
 - aspects of assessment in some subject areas; and
 - the development of new courses or the use of bi-level teaching in some subject areas.
6. **All EAs have a wide range of existing plans to provide support for their schools in response to their identified support needs.** Authority support mechanisms include:
 - the deployment of their own staff or use of their own resources,
 - the use of subject specialists or networks; and
 - the facilitation of professional dialogue and collaboration.

For most EAs, the planned national SQA events in the summer term will be another important source of support for their staff.

- 7. Over and above the extensive planned EA and national support, there is a need for Education Scotland and other national bodies, such as SQA, to provide additional support for secondary schools and EAs in a number of specific topic areas.** Most notably, this support is required in relation to aspects of some new NQs, assessment, moderation and quality assurance, how best to deliver a Broad General Education S1 to S3 and how best to structure and deliver the Senior Phase.

Conclusion

There are no requests for whole-school delay in the implementation of new NQs and the audit did not identify any individual departments which have requested delay through the exceptional circumstances arrangements. Given the level of preparation by schools and EAs noted through the audit and taking account of the range of planned and additional targeted support now being taken forward in response to the audit, we are confident that the implementation of the new NQs and full delivery of Curriculum for Excellence continues to be achievable within the currently agreed national timescale.

Next steps

The context for implementation is evolving rapidly. At the end of April, the final course arrangement documents were published by the SQA and a first tranche of support materials targeted on the courses undergoing greatest change was published by Education Scotland. Schools have been granted an additional two days for in-service training and local authorities are considering with their schools how best to deploy these. A summary of the overall programme of national support for implementation was also published.

In the light of that dynamic context, ES will use the results of the audit and work closely with EAs and other national and professional bodies, to help plan further support, both in terms of targeted and customised input for individual EAs, schools or groups of schools and in terms of producing further national support materials in areas where further guidance is needed. Our staff will visit EAs in May and June to update national support plans; and will also visit secondary schools to discuss any individual support needs. This process will help to ensure that support mechanisms are in place to respond to changing support needs as they arise.