

# schools of ambition leading change

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VISION

INNOVATION

LEADERSHIP

TRANSFORMATION

schools of ambition  
leading change

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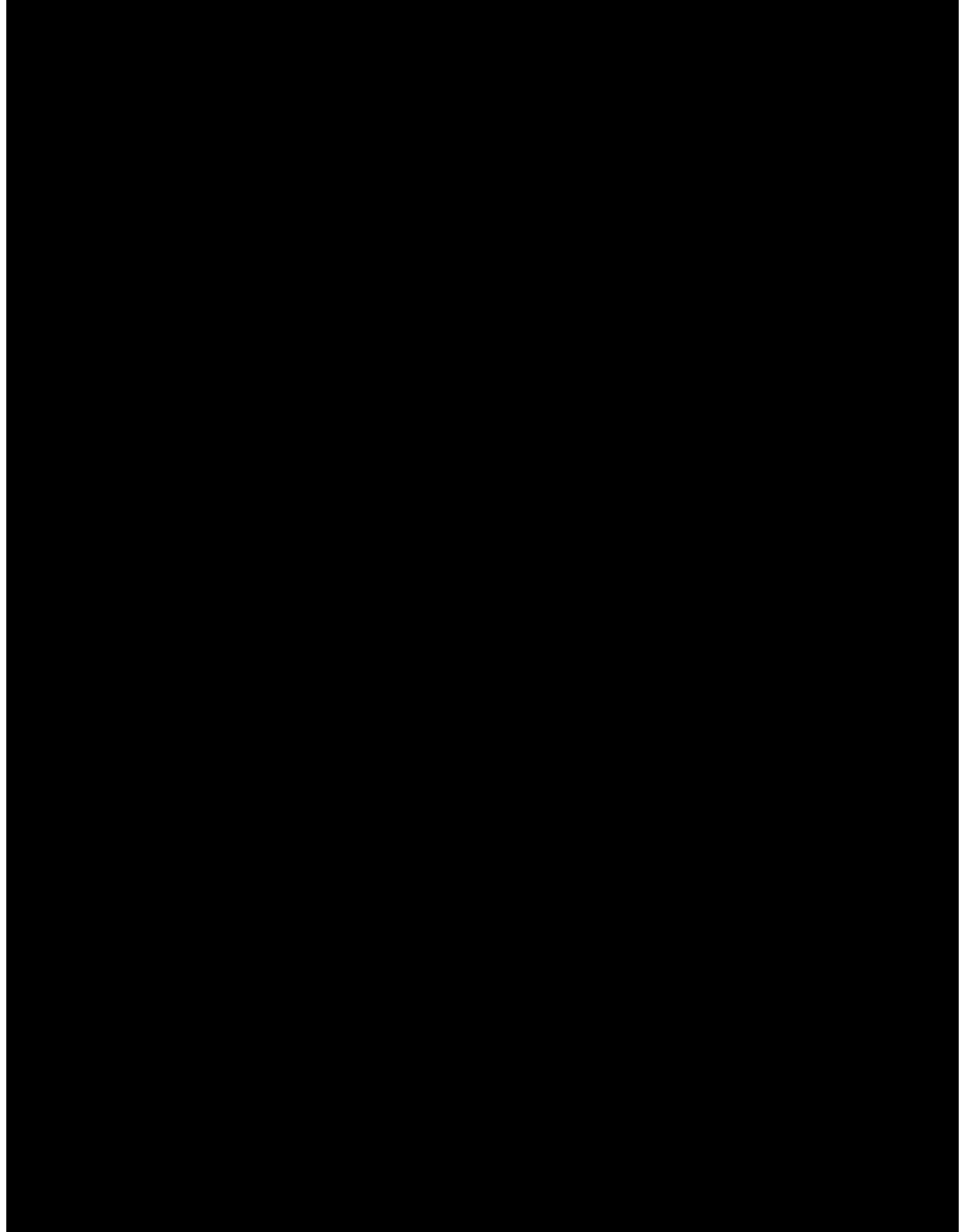


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TRANSFORMATION

## Foreword

The Schools of Ambition programme was announced in 2005, with the aim of bringing about a step change in ethos and performance of secondary schools in Scotland. The objective was not just to transform participating schools, but by sharing the emerging learning from the schools' activities and reflections, to provide inspiration for others.

Whilst the initiative began prior to the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence*, many of the schools' interventions exemplify the creativity and innovation needed to change the way we organise learning for young people.

The Schools of Ambition Team have worked with 52 schools across Scotland. The first 21 schools to participate have now completed their supported journey of transformation, with seven others due to finish later this year (see Appendix 1 for list of schools). Many innovative and effective interventions are emerging, and the aim of this publication is to give a flavour of some of the very diverse initiatives and approaches undertaken by these schools. The first schools have also provided an account of their journey, called "Telling the Story", which detail the challenges, activities and reflections of their journey. If you want more details of the exemplars illustrated in this booklet you can read the fuller story published on the schools' websites accessed directly through the following LTS web-link, <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition>. Better still, get in touch with the schools directly and find out more.

We would like to thank all of the schools who have shared their journey through the exemplars illustrated in this booklet and in the fuller version of the "Telling the Story" documents. We hope the enthusiasm and dedication of many of the individuals involved, both pupils and teachers, will inspire others in their "Journey to Excellence".

**Scottish Government Schools of Ambition Team**



# 1 Developing leadership

Leadership is the main driving force behind school transformation. All schools on the programme emphasise the importance of generating a sense of shared purpose and promoting ethos and culture in their schools. Headteachers have reported that taking time to consult with staff and pupils, and establishing clear and appropriate communication within the school is essential to whole-school engagement. They have also highlighted the importance of widening the leadership participation base by providing distributed leadership opportunities. Not only does this “spread the load”, but it contributes to the sustainability of developments, and builds capacity and confidence to take risks.

**Annual Research Report, 2008**

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## Braes High School – Building the school ethos

The challenge facing Braes High School was that as a relatively new school (established in 2000), it had not yet developed a positive school ethos. It was hampered by the lack of a school history, and the fact that it was linked with nine separate primaries over a disparate catchment area. To develop the school ethos Braes High focused coordinated activities across a number of parallel development strands, principally, building staff and student leadership, and building the School Community.

Encouraging staff leadership took a range of forms. All staff were encouraged to come forward with ideas to improve the school, and support provided to help implementation. Teacher learning communities were also established to share emerging good practice and a staff council has been formed to ensure a continuing forum for staff.

Likewise, pupil engagement and leadership was stimulated in a number of ways. Training for the pupil council to participate in issues surrounding teaching and learning was provided, and healthy competition throughout the school was introduced through an inter-house activity programme. Reward Assemblies are held regularly to celebrate pupils' success. Over 10% of school pupils are currently involved in leadership activities, with the pupils developing a popular school motto, "**Build Respect And Earn Success**". *"We cannot believe how successful our motto has been in shaping the ethos of the school..."*

### Headteacher, Braes High

Building the school community has included building stronger links with associated primaries, improving links with parents and building school tradition. The latter has included the introduction of a graduation ceremony, Burns supper, and a school sports day.

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The school has seen dramatic improvements in outcomes. During the period from 05/06 to 07/08, exclusion rates were reduced by 70%, the number of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 4 increased by 10%, and positive destinations raised by 11%.

*"I am very proud to have been at Braes High ... 3 years ago I would have been lying if I said that. Thank you for making my last 2 years the happiest years of my life."*

**S6 School leaver**



## Newbattle High School – Peak performance

Newbattle High School has been taking action to develop leadership in staff and pupils throughout the school. After consulting the staff, the idea emerged that all pupils (from S2 and S5/6) come together for one period a week to focus on developing their leadership and teamwork skills in an initiative called “Peak Performance”.

At the start of S2, following presentations by staff, each pupil is asked to choose which area they would most like to get involved in. This can either include participation in the Football, Dance or Basketball specialist groups, or in areas associated with the school productions, e.g. Music, Drama (performance), Media Studies (production), Art and Design, Technical Education (practical), Home Economics (costumes) and Business Education (marketing).

Involvement in Peak Performance is highly motivating for the pupils involved, demonstrated by the high quality events produced in the school, *“I can honestly say it was one of the best shows I have been to in years”*. **Local Councillor**, *“HMIE recommended the performance”*. In addition, the school achieved the Midlothian award for Outstanding Contribution to School Sport in 2007.

Involvement in Peak Performance in S2 also allows interested individuals to take up an intermediate award in Art, Basketball, Dance and Football when they move into one of the Academies in S3. The S5 and S6 pupils can pick up “extra” awards in Sport Leadership and Working With Others from the SQA.

Peak Performance has significantly impacted on staff leadership, with the success of the programme dependent on the collaboration and leadership of a total of 19 (mainly unpromoted) staff across seven traditional subject areas. Building on this the school has offered further leadership opportunities including; supporting several unpromoted teachers in a two-day leadership course, appointing a member of staff to the new role of pupil leadership coordinator, and the opportunity to demonstrate innovative practice in learning and teaching to peers. In a recent visit (2009) HMIE commended Peak Performance as an example of good practice, and the focus on staff development emerging from Peak Performance has accelerated the school’s aim to achieve Investors in People accreditation.

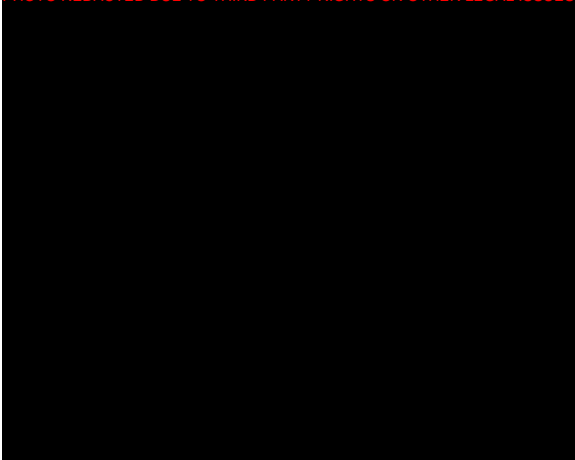
## Lossiemouth High School – A values-driven leadership academy

Many positive changes have occurred in Lossiemouth High School through developing and embedding a values-driven leadership approach. A key belief is that by nurturing the school's values of Excellence, Teamwork, Respect and Humour through distributive leadership, the consensual attitudes that evolve will lead to better achievement, positive attitudes and a can-do approach. The school felt that the skills and attributes needed for leadership had to be made more explicit through modelling and mentoring, and directly linked to practical opportunities. An ambitious series of interventions are now underway with staff, pupils and the wider community to establish and embed school values.

Building on a well-established range of leadership opportunities, all staff participated in a weekend residential course on coaching and mentoring. Following this, two lead teacher coaches were appointed to oversee coaching in staff leadership, including the establishment of a buddying system. The teacher coaches are also responsible for systematic identification of staff leadership training and opportunities as ongoing CPD. Leadership in curriculum development has been enhanced with the formation of a staff collegiality group, and some interesting outcomes include three new S1 cross curriculum electives: Language and Literacy, Art and Philosophy, Creative and Expressive Arts.

A number of S2 pupils worked closely with the Depute Head to embed the school values with all S1 pupils, and also led successful leadership academies with P7 pupils from associated primary schools. Other pupil-led activities have included; establishing "Lossie Rocks" (a Social Enterprise production company), and fundraising project groups in each

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year from S1-S4. Pupil leaders also had the chance to present at a number of national conferences including a national HMIE conference on systemic change.

*"... opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility have been extended ... the school had increased its use of a residential leadership initiative very effectively to develop the confidence and self-esteem of specific groups of pupils."*

**(HMIE, June, 2007)**



## Our Lady and St Patrick's High School – Pupil leadership programme

Our Lady and St Patrick's High School has established a pupil leadership programme which offers three academies each year. Two groups of 32 lower school pupils go to Rowardennan Youth Hostel and one group of 24 upper school pupils spend a week at The Pilgrimage Centre in Luss. These academies focus on the promotion of values and skills as well as the development of insights into leadership. For the older pupils, taking part in a demanding leadership programme is directly aimed at assisting them to undertake responsibility for an element of service to the school community in their sixth year.

Pupils reflect on their personal values and the important influences in their lives and through a series of highly interactive workshops, are encouraged to explore social and moral responsibilities and how these can be applied to everyday contexts. In tandem, pupils have to work in teams to resolve a number of challenges. They also engage in a simulation exercise culminating in a presentation and the submission of a business plan on issues affecting an imaginary community.

As a consequence of the leadership programme, the school offers a number of projects that allow pupils to put their leadership into practice. Lower school pupils have been involved in designing and producing motivational posters for use throughout the school. Another group collected and recycled ink cartridges and mobile phones, giving the proceeds to ChildLine. One group of sixth-year pupils produced an anti-bullying DVD which won a national award, whilst another has established a credit union within the school.

Pupils and staff have responded very positively to the experiences, and there is evidence of increased confidence, self-worth and motivation. *“There is clear evidence that the programme makes a difference ... it is an extremely effective way of engaging pupils and in providing them with opportunities to practice leadership in the school community...”*

**Depute Head Teacher, Our Lady and St Patrick's High School**

The leadership programme is devised and delivered by school personnel and pupils. The pursuit of SQA certification is now underway and the programme will be sustained as an integral part of the whole school curriculum.

## 2. Developing capacity

A rapidly changing educational environment accelerates the need for developing the professional capacity of teachers, both in the type of things learnt and the way that they are shared. Many schools on the programme have been very creative in developing extensive peer-led CPD opportunities, and promoting teacher-champions of learning methodologies. Peer observation is also well developed in many schools. Headteachers have noted that there appears to be an enhanced professionalism amongst their teachers, producing a culture where conversations on teaching and learning are a regular feature. Schools investing in the professional capacity of teachers are particularly well placed to respond to the opportunities presented by the *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**Annual Research Report, 2008**

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## St Ninian's High School – Developing whole school learning and teaching methodologies

In order to change behaviours and attitudes to education, St Ninian's decided to develop the use of formative assessment throughout the school. Work began initially in the Science and English Departments, and later expanded to include Active Learning, which has particular emphasis on interactivity in the classroom.

Sharing learning intentions at the start of the lesson and summarising content covered at the end was a feature in both departments, and pupils are encouraged to traffic-light against their own understanding. In science, techniques include the use of content-generator software to create quizzes and the use of a hand-held voting device which projects class responses to a screen as a diagnostic tool for understanding. Cooperative learning techniques are also employed to allow pupils to work together to find out what they know, and to solve problems as a group. Feedback from teachers is very positive indicating the high engagement and enjoyment of pupils in the tasks, helping those with less confidence to participate.

The English department has been raising attainment in writing at S1/S2 through the use of peer and group work designed to encourage engagement and critical thinking. Techniques include: modelling of work exemplars against marking criteria; peer marking; and use of Storyboards to prompt discussion on images in poems. English teachers have noted significant improvements in writing, and in class ethos. The techniques have now been shared with all other departments through a series of annual in-house "Active Learning" days, so that by the end of three years, the use of the techniques has expanded across the whole school. The annual Active Learning days allow all staff to demonstrate successful formative assessment and active learning techniques. These are shared nationally with teachers' learning communities via GLOW.

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A 2008 HMIE report commended the "quality of the pupils" learning experience in English, the innovative writing units have now been disseminated to the English HMI network and the school has received a number of invitations to deliver in-service training in the methodologies. The Modern Languages department was also invited by HMIE to provide sample lessons in "*Sector Leading and Innovative Practice*" and to deliver a seminar on Active Learning strategies at the Scottish CILT/HMIE National Conference.

## Wallace Hall Academy – Systematic development of learning and teaching methodologies

Wallace Hall Academy has introduced substantial curricular change throughout the school. Bringing S4/5/6 together has enabled them to include new courses within the curriculum and to deliver more distinct level classes at Higher and Intermediate 2 level. To embed the School's Learning and Teaching policy and practises consistently in the development of these new courses, Learning Leaders have been appointed at Faculty (rather than subject) level. These Learning Leaders form a core team of committed practitioners who help develop the learning and teaching experience across different curricular areas.

To ensure that the Learning and Teaching policy is applied consistently, the school has also adopted a grid-planning approach for each course. The grids consist of tables detailing activities and resources under the following headings – Content/Outcome, Resources, ICT Input, Homework/Assessments, and Methodology. By using this consistent and systematic approach, Departments and Learning Leaders use as the grids as working documents which are easily reviewed at departmental meetings. The form of the grids enables the rapid identification of curricular gaps, allows for updates of resources and highlights areas in need of improvement in teaching methodologies.

The result has been a coherent approach across the school to the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Policy. Pupils are getting a better learning experience, different learning styles are being catered for and Assessment is for Learning teaching strategies are consistently evident. The grid has been particularly useful in ensuring that the new two-year Higher courses develop enhanced experiences, and develop pupils' capacities in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

*"We are particularly pleased that at a recent HMIE visit, the grid planning methodology was identified as a highly effective tool for facilitating the school's self-evaluation as well as enhancing pupils learning experiences."* **Deputy Head Teacher, Wallace Hall Academy**



### 3. Developing partnerships

Partnership working is becoming increasingly more important in all schools, and depending on the needs of their school community, schools have concentrated on different aspects of partnership. Finding ways of involving parents and embedding schools within the local community have been key activities for some schools whilst others have focused on improving links with other educational establishments to ensure the best transition for pupils. Developing and sustaining links with local employers to inform work-related learning provision is also an expanding theme. Additionally mutually supportive partnerships, both formal and informal have become a significant factor in the development of confidence and good practice within the school community.

**Research Coordinator, Research Support Team**

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## Anderson High School – Global partnerships

Pupils in Anderson High School are “Living locally, learning globally”. Building on existing global school partnerships, Anderson High has expanded, diversified and intensified shared learning between the schools. Though the use of video-conferencing and employing the dedicated website [www.global-classroom.org](http://www.global-classroom.org), staff and pupils from Australia, Czech Republic, Germany, New Jersey, Japan, South Africa, and Sweden, have developed and shared a series of courses and projects.

All S1 Social Subject class groups in Anderson High undertake a Social Subjects topic with a global partner class group. Students are involved in planning the three components of the course, Myself, My school and My Community. *“The advantages of the sharing perspectives course are that not only do younger students get to know others from other countries and their school system, they have to think about themselves, their school system and their hometown”.* **Teacher, Graf Friedrich Schule, Germany**

Other collaborative courses have included the examination of *The Munich Conference of September 1938* in collaboration with students from Germany; sharing Biology experiments, and participation in bio-ethical debates with schools in South Africa; *“...pupils themselves have realised that by teaching others, or sharing presentations, they learn far better”.* **Principal Teacher Biology**

In addition to sharing virtual classrooms, Anderson High has also attended and hosted a number of global staff/pupil conferences, and a number of reciprocal study visits have taken place. These have included visits from pupils on the Higher Modern Studies course to New Jersey to examine, “The American Dream”, and disadvantaged pupils from Anderson working with disadvantaged children from South Africa.





## St Paul's High School – Parental partnerships

Traditionally, there had been a low parental turn-out (30-40%) at formal parental opportunities in St Paul's High School. Following the implementation of a successful pilot scheme, the traditional "Parents Night" was scrapped. It was replaced with a week-long opportunity for parents to visit the school at a time of their choosing. Appointments are now organised throughout the day, with one member of staff providing feedback in a school location that guarantees privacy and comfort.

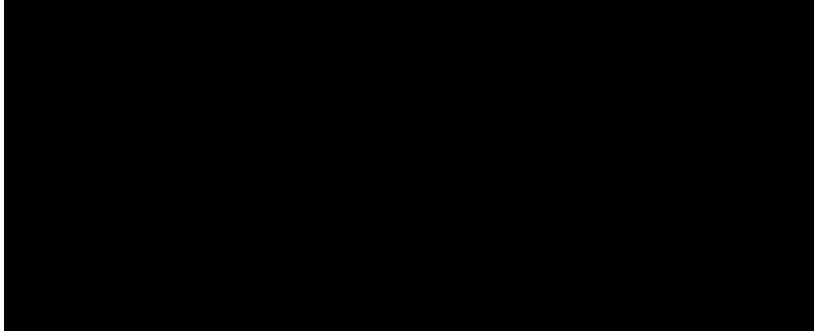
The new approach resulted in an immediate increase in average parental attendances, with 2007 figures reaching as high as 95%. *"Parents seem to enjoy one-to-one contact, and at the meeting the whole focus is on the child, making it specific to them."* **Principal Teacher, Pastoral Care**

Getting parents through the door in such big numbers has made a real difference to the ethos of the school, and has increased parental input. Parents' pride in their children's achievements has increased and communication from the school to the parents is done in the knowledge that they are active supporters of their children. Feedback from HMIE on the practice has also been very encouraging, *"Well established innovative arrangements for reporting and discussing pupils' progress with parents were very successful."* **HMIE, 2007**

Internal consultation was essential to the success of the project, as it involved a change in working conditions. To ensure everyone was comfortable with the process, CPD was offered to all inexperienced colleagues on how to conduct one-to-one parental interviews, and arrangements were also put in place to ensure that no individual teacher was overburdened. The approach has clearly demonstrated that, *"The notion of parental lack of interest in their child's learning was rejected as a myth"*.

**Ex Headteacher, St Paul's High School**

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## Castlemilk High School and St Margaret Mary's High School – Establishing and embedding school partnerships

Both Castlemilk High School and St Margaret Mary's High School serve the Castlemilk community, an area of multiple deprivation. Both schools were affected by low and falling school rolls, which placed restrictions on the range of courses which could be offered to senior pupils. The schools formed a joint development plan with the aim of raising attainment and achievement, and appointed a project manager to ensure communication and common action between schools.

Curricular flexibility was achieved through cross-school links, putting novel courses (e.g. football coaching and driving lessons) on the curriculum and increasing partnership working with FE colleges. A 2008 HMIE report highlighted that the partnership, *“enabled pupils to study up to five subjects in S5/6 at Intermediate 1 to Higher levels and in a few subjects, Advanced Higher in S6”*. The schools also transported pupils to FE colleges directly from school. Other interventions included; improving school attendance and the introduction of a three-year CPD training programme to enhance learning and teaching in both schools.

Careful planning and communication has made cross-school courses a reality. Initially pupils were apprehensive about crossing territorial boundaries, and were transported by taxi. However, mixing between the schools has become the norm and pupils now do so on foot. Feedback from pupils has been very positive, *“Moving to a different school for one subject certainly increased my own confidence and adaptability”*, **Pupil, Castlemilk High**  
*“It was like going from home to home,... the receiving Headteacher was very supportive.”*  
**Pupil, St Margaret Mary's Secondary School**

Early joint forward planning meetings between both schools are now built into the schools management process, allowing options to be in place for pupils by early January.

Attendance in both schools improved by 4.5% from 2005-2008 through a range of measures including the introduction of a truancy monitoring system. The success of the increased CPD provision was highlighted in a recent 2008 HMIE inspection for Castlemilk. *“The overall quality of teaching was very good, it has become a major strength following significant investment in staff development through the Schools of Ambition programme.”*



## Wallace Hall Academy – Improving the transitions from partner primary schools

Like many schools, Wallace Hall Academy has a well established induction process for transition from primary to secondary school, which includes a series of reciprocal visits and detailed exchange of pupil information. However, a crucial gap remained in terms of curriculum continuity between the primaries and the secondary. To address this, the school introduced collaborative working arrangements to raise teachers' understanding of learning and teaching across the primary/secondary boundary, and to ensure pupil progress in a subject area in P1-S1.

Three Primary 6/7 Teachers were paired with secondary teachers from Maths and English Departments. They firstly observed the other teaching, and then planned two lessons together to be taught cooperatively in each teacher's class. Detailed evaluations of the activities were carried out using anonymous questionnaires, and outcomes and reflections shared at a meeting attended by a senior member of the Wallace Hall management team. This was followed up by final evaluative discussions at a shared in-service day between the participating schools.

All teachers found this to be a very valuable exercise, allowing them to identify the gaps in pupil knowledge and skills in the subjects between P7 and S1. A number of changes in learning and teaching practices were subsequently adopted by the partnership group, including sharing of lesson objectives, peer learning and an expanded range of resources was used in the classroom.

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Time was the critical resource highlighted by all teachers in sustaining this activity, and they recommended more shared CPD activities related to learning and teaching to make meaningful transition improvements for pupils. Teachers stressed the need for commitment within the partnership cluster both to sustain links already made and to roll out similar collaborative working at all levels, "...as many teachers as possible should visit primary/secondary...". **Participating teacher**

## 4. Introducing skills for learning, life and work

*Curriculum for Excellence* stipulates the need to ensure that there are opportunities for all pupils to learn practical skills as well as academic skills within our schools. One of the most significant early developments within Schools of Ambition is an increased range of vocational curriculum choice offered within many schools. Schools leading in this area faced and overcame many structural and practical difficulties, including restructuring timetables, difficulties with transport problems relating to college staff on site, and pupil tracking. The impact of introducing vocational curriculum within the schools can be directly measured in terms of a range of positive indicators, including leaver destinations, referral records, attainment etc.

**Annual Research Report, 2008**

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## Cardinal Newman High School – Developing vocational opportunities

Cardinal Newman High School, has worked intensively with FE colleges, to introduce a diverse range of vocational opportunities within the school curriculum. This includes Professional Cookery, Construction, Horticulture, Rural Skills, SVQ in Food and Drink Service, and an in-house Professional Photography course. All of the courses are award bearing, all of them are delivered within the school, and alternative routes are offered for pupils of differing abilities.

An early indicator of the success of the programme was the high number of S3 and S4 pupils taking a vocational option (40%), with pupils recognising that the courses gave them access to knowledge specific to the course, but also to more general employability skills. A highlight of the provision is the Junior Hospitality Academy, which supports the school's Snapdragon Restaurant and has allowed the school to offer a course at Intermediate 2 in Hospitality: Professional Cookery. There are also opportunities to develop skills further through Motherwell College, apprenticeships, or the school's extensive business partnerships.

Feedback from the students has been very positive, *"It's as though when I am in the kitchen and restaurant it doesn't feel like school because I actually feel like I'm out working in an actual kitchen"*. **(Hospitality student)**, and has earned Cardinal Newman a number of awards and accolades, including; the Catering in Scotland Innovation in Training Award, and Scotland & N. Ireland's College Restaurant of the Year. A 2008 HMIE report praised the school's approach, identifying it as innovative and effective, and an exemplar for other Scottish Schools – *"...the quality of the teaching in the kitchen was of a very high standard, and staff had very good relationships with the pupils"*. These responses undoubtedly influenced the school's overall success in taking forward its vision of, *"Making a significant difference to the life and choices of its pupils."*

## Inverness High School – Growing a Social Enterprise Company

Inverness High School identified a Social Enterprise Company as the way for them to improve opportunities both for pupils, and for the surrounding community. Two separate companies, working in partnership with local businesses and voluntary organisations, were formed to take the idea forward. A charity, Real Education, Active Lives (REAL) began in 2005, allowing access to a range of grants, and the appointment of a school-based youth worker. To oversee the business side of the project, a Community Interest Company, REAL (CIC), 2006 was formed with the Board of Directors for the CIC recruited from local businesses and organisations.

In the first enterprise, “REAL Organics”, pupils grow vegetables within the school grounds, with the support of a farm manager. To cope with the expanding retail demands for the produce, “REAL Food” was formed shortly after. Pupils are involved in the enterprise in a range of ways such as: participation in the gardening club, eco-school group, selling the produce in local markets or through courses such as Rural Skills, and Community Involvement. The Science and Home Economics departments also use the farm as a teaching resource. REAL Food provides comprehensive induction, leadership and teambuilding opportunities for all pupils who sell in local markets *“Working for the farming business is really interesting, and through my Biology and Rural Skills class I also work in the fields ... it’s good the way it all links together.”* **(14-year-old pupil)**

The initiative has been very successful in engaging the pupils and in involving the local community. The Rector highlighted that, *“despite the fact that there are significant costs in time and resource in blending school management with two companies ... participation in a*

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*genuine business has proved so valuable to all the individuals involved”.* The success and interest in the ongoing Enterprise is reflected in a recent royal visit and the winning of the Schools Social Enterprise Award in 2008.



## Blairgowrie High School – Developing skills for the local economy

Blairgowrie High School faced a number of challenges in 2005 including the need to improve the engagement and attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of the pupils and to improve relations with the local community. In response, the school tailored the curriculum both to meet local industry needs and to expose older pupils to relevant vocational learning opportunities and local businesses.

A project manager, with a place on the school management team, was appointed. The appointee worked closely with local authority staff, Perth College and Forestry Enterprise to introduce *Skills for Work* in Horticulture and Forestry, with the school targeting in particular, students most likely to disengage in academic learning. The Scottish *Progression Award* in rural Skills in S5 and S6 (Intermediate level) has also been introduced. These changes involved altering the timetable to create blocks of time for pupils to work outside the school, either in college or in rural locations.

All participating pupils have successfully completed the SPA in Rural Skills, with a number either being offered apprenticeships with local employers, or going on to further land-based training at various FE colleges. All pupils reported that they enjoyed working with employers, were enthusiastic about learning in the work place, and that they would recommend the course to others. The recent completion of a professional kitchen and restaurant will also add to the range of choices on offer in the future.

The introduction of the Rural Skills courses has been extremely beneficial, *“There is no doubt that these courses have allowed pupils to develop in ways which would not have been possible within the traditional curriculum ... the reputation of the school has been enhanced within the community, as they have become excellent ambassadors”*.

**Depute Rector.** External feedback too has been very positive, with Partner employers reporting a high level of satisfaction. Surveys with parents have indicated that these courses were highly valued, some expressing surprise at the level of enthusiasm and motivation engendered as a result.

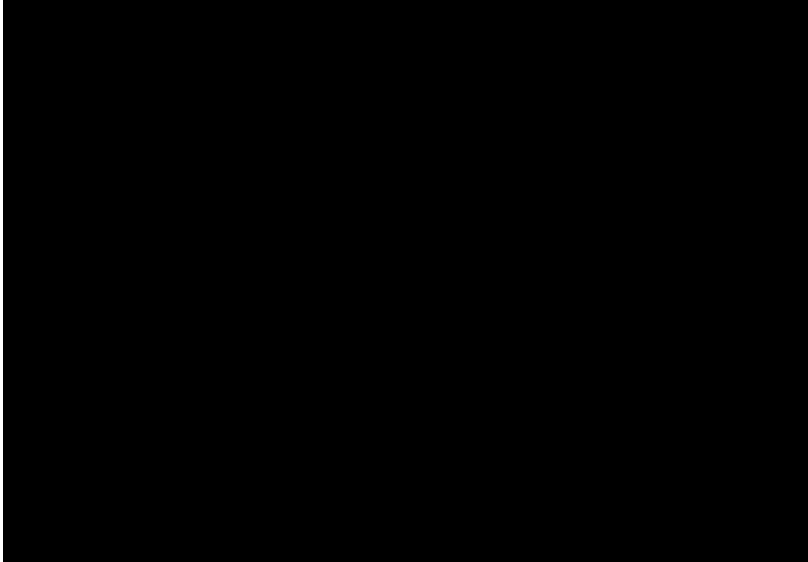
## Castle Douglas High School – Development of a flexible vocational curriculum

Castle Douglas High School found more and more pupils opting to stay on post 16, yet the traditional courses offered were not meeting the needs of all of its pupils. Equally, those who went on to further education courses did not seem to be developing the appropriate skills that met local employment needs. To address this, the school set about the task of introducing a wider range of learning for S3-S6 with a strong emphasis on skills for learning, life and work.

The needs of the local employers were established first. This began by talking to parents, the local FE college and a wide range of businesses and employers. The need for courses in Construction Skills, Rural Skills, Customer Care, Travel and Tourism, Enterprise, Digital Design, Digital Literacy, Financial Services, and Work Experience was identified, and in partnership with the local FE college, these have been introduced into the school. Opportunities also exist within the school for pupils to work towards the key points of employability as identified by the Confederation of British Industry.

To ensure that learners' needs are met, individualised learning and training need plans (e-portfolios) were established for each pupil. Through these pupils skills needs are identified, pupils have the opportunity to set their own targets, and progress is tracked. The

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staff too have benefited from the development of the wider curriculum, giving many opportunities for leadership development through collegiate working both within the school and with the local FE college. The school has formalised the approach into a Vocational Learning Policy allowing monitoring and sustainability of the changes introduced.





## 5. Enhancing the curriculum

Recognising the need to motivate and inspire pupils, particularly those with low confidence and self-esteem, many schools have developed a range of innovative ways of engaging their pupils. Some have developed new methodologies in cross-curricular working, a number have also provided an enhanced provision of creative arts into the curriculum, and some have focused on the development of very diverse extra curricular activities. They all have one thing in common, very positive feedback from the pupils and from the staff involved in the activities.

**Research Support Team, School of Ambition**

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## Doon Academy – Arts across the curriculum

Teachers and artists in Doon Academy worked in partnership to deliver the science curriculum through the medium of arts. The aim of the project was to engage and motivate pupils not previously interested in science whilst exposing them to an art form. The project involved the use of Animation, Dance and Drama to teach students a series of science topics through Integrated Curricular Lessons (ICLs). In each class pupils were taught traditionally for two periods out of three, with every third period delivered jointly by the teacher and the artist. Planning is an essential element between teacher and artist, with sharing of curriculum objectives, artistic inputs, assessment criteria and post-class reflection.

Dance is used to help to deliver the S1 topic of Atoms and Molecules. Here the properties of the three states of matter are reinforced by students transferring the science concepts into dance movement. Teachers found that the technique increased engagement and enjoyment of science generally. Drama is used to help understanding in a number of science topics, Animal testing (S4), Global warming (S4), Food chains (S3), Reproduction (S1). In Animal Testing, for example, the students develop comedy sketches, and a soap-style drama to illustrate different viewpoints. In Global Warming students create a News Documentary, and in Food Chains they create and film a drama illustrating interactions between predators and prey. The pupils' confidence has grown as the programme progressed and the teachers found it useful in developing more informed attitudes. Animation is used to explore the digestive system. Here pupils produce 30

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second animations of different parts of the digestive system. They then create a script and learn how to use software and video-making equipment to produce a DVD. This was very popular with students, *"We learned lots of stuff about the digestive system ... we learned how to use science equipment...we learned how to put everything together into a DVD"... we learned a lot faster ... it shows that biology can be fun."* **Pupil Focus group response**

*"All the pupils were engaged in the project, all grew in their understanding of the digestive system ... they learned without realising they were learning ... and there was a noticeable improvement in the behaviour and effort of poorly behaved pupils."* **Class Teacher**

## Braeview Academy – Performance arts in the curriculum

Braeview Academy, sited in an area of high social and economic deprivation, was challenged by problems of pupils' low self-esteem, under achievement and poor community perception. To raise ambition and enhance the school's reputation in the community, Braeview created a more flexible and pupil-centred curriculum by championing creativity and by providing pupils with opportunities to engage with the arts.

The school's assembly hall was refurbished to provide a multi-performance and teaching area, renamed the "Ambition Hall". This became a tangible focus for the school's transformation with the staging of the school's 10th birthday event, talent shows, Christmas concerts and the successful all-school production of the musical *Bugsy Malone* in 2008. The growing interest in drama is reflected in the number of Braeview pupils taking part in the Dundee Schools Music Theatre annual productions, and the appointment of 1.5 full-time drama staff. The construction of a dance and fitness area has also allowed the school to offer the SQA Dance class at Higher level in 2009/2010.

Extended arts provision also provides educational experiences for some of the most vulnerable pupils. Working with the local authority's Cultural Coordinators, these pupils have: created a stained-glass window, reflecting the school's vision, completed an exterior wall painting, and have refurbished the chairs in the drama studio.

A recent staff survey reflected that staff think that the improved drama facilities have had the biggest effect on confidence and self-esteem throughout the school, which has impacted on pupils attitudes and behaviour lauded in a recent **HMIE (2008)** report, "*The environment for learning in the school has been transformed and was much more positive, pupil behaviour had improved.*" "*Attainment, and attendance, is improving and exclusions are down: pride and aspiration is up ... there is no doubt that the transformation of our assembly hall has been a metaphor for the transformation of Braeview academy.*"

**Headteacher**

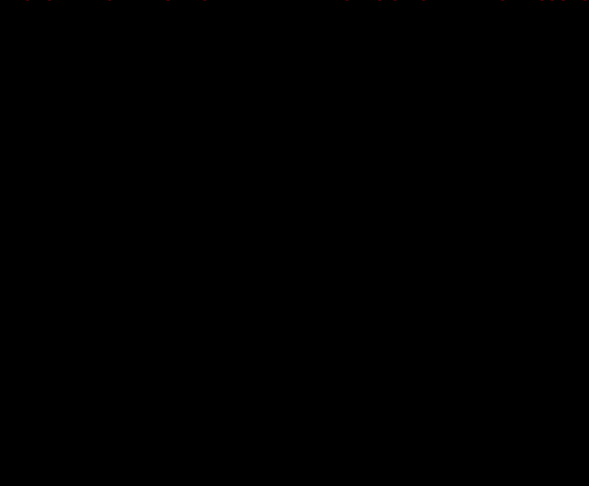
## St Modan's High School – widening the curriculum through Period 7

St Modan's High School has developed a way to provide all pupils with the opportunity to participate in additional experience-based activities. By restructuring the school week they have encouraged maximum pupil participation in a wide range of artistic, creative, musical and physical activities, which will help the children's holistic development.

Following parental consent, the school day now finishes Tuesday-Thursday at 2.50 pm., and on Mondays additional activities take place in what is known as "Period 7" (2.50-4.10 pm). Over 40 diverse activities are now included in Period 7. These include sessions on: Body Combat, Italian Cookery, Magic, Gardening and Samba Band, to name but a few. Many senior pupils also participate or help to lead activities, and pupils from S4 are also offered the opportunity to gain direct experience in enterprise activities, by visiting local businesses during Period 7.

Period 7 has been a great success all round. Many partnership links have been made between local businesses and agencies, pupils and teachers are forging positive relationships and feedback from parents and pupils has been very encouraging. 93% of parents surveyed believe that it is of real benefit to their child, *"I think it is a great idea, my children are both benefiting from the extra sports activities and having fun doing them ..."* *"... the school sees developing the whole person (as important) and allows kids to be exposed to a wider range of topics and skills."*

**Parents of participating children**



All of the pupils surveyed agreed that they have improved their skills and knowledge as a direct result. *"You get to do something that you enjoy and wouldn't normally get to do ... I now know how to create dresses"... "I learned how to play samba"... "I have learned about teamwork"*

**S2 pupils.** Period 7 will continue to evolve, and future plans include developing partnership working with Stirling Sports Village to offer even more additional provision in Period 7.



## Barrhead High School – Cross-curricular writing

Barrhead High School identified that lack of writing skills was a possible cause for pupil under-achievement in subjects that were more practical in nature. To address this, the school appointed an English teacher to work across the curriculum, focusing on the writing component in courses and examinations for S5 and S6 pupils.

Recognising that teachers might be sensitive to implied criticism, the methodology for addressing this issue was carefully considered. A highly experienced teacher, with excellent interpersonal skills, was appointed on a 0.5 FTE basis. Her task was outlined at an in-service day, with departments asked to “invite her into their class” to assess the writing needs of the pupils and to allow the teacher to “suggest” methodology in the teaching of writing to teachers of other subjects.

As uptake from other teachers was initially hesitant, the appointee began work with pupils directly, supporting them in writing their UCAS personal statement. Over time resistance to her support relaxed, and she began to work with a number of departments. Feedback from staff illustrates the value of the approach. For instance, in Advanced Geography, she helped to create exemplars modelling the skills required in the extended written project, as well as producing departmental resources. *“With the additional support they all passed at Advanced Higher level B – a fantastic achievement as some had no English Higher”* **(Teacher, Geography Department)** In Art she helped make the written resources more accessible, *“...the support empowered students to take responsibility for their learning and increased their confidence and performance in their SQA results.”* **(Teacher, Art Department)**

Class teachers in the school are now willing to invite support in the classroom at a much earlier stage. Sustainability of the intervention is found both in the development of the staff involved. *“It has made me start to adapt materials myself and try the methods with other groups of pupils.”* **(Teacher, P.E. Department)** as well as the creation of permanent resources for participating subject areas.

## 6. Enhancing pupil experiences

In addition to expanding the curriculum, many schools decided to take action to address very specific challenges or circumstances facing the pupils in their school. For some this was targeting extra support for some groups of pupils who were under-achieving, others developed a more generic approach to develop pupils' confidence and self esteem. Here learning has been promoted by finding mechanisms to encourage achievement and by addressing some underlying issues resulting from deprivation. What the activities share is that they are innovative, effective and have made a tangible difference to the pupils' lives and outcomes.

**Research Support Team, School of Ambition**

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## Doon Academy – Emotional health and wellbeing

The Doon Learning Partnership (consisting of Doon Academy and its four associated Primaries) lies within an area of multiple deprivation, and increasingly, guidance staff are encountering a growing number of pupils presenting with mental health and wellbeing issues. Staff felt they lacked the expertise to deal with these and the school appointed a full-time School Nurse dedicated to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of the children.

The postholder's work was divided into 50% preventative work and 50% mental health and emotional wellbeing support to children with difficulties. Preventative work has included developing a programme, "Looking after our Feelings" for primary schools, and participation in the Doon Learning Partnership's integrated support team. *"As well as making a difference with individuals, our whole school has benefited through her contributions to the Integrated Support Team, the training of staff and awareness raising in school."*

### **Head Teacher, Doon Academy**

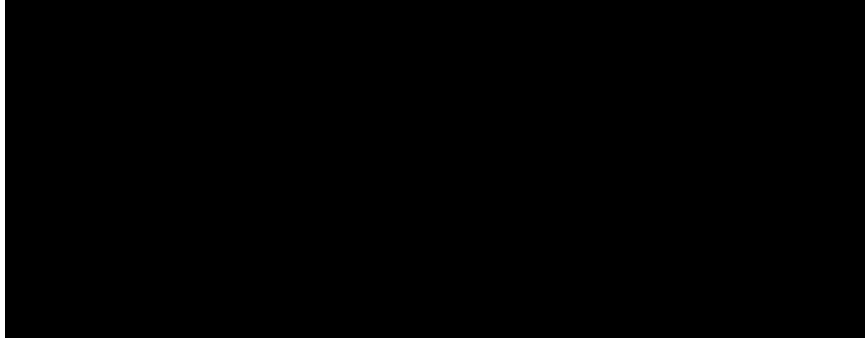
The most common cause of mental and emotional difficulties were as a result of loss, chaotic family lifestyles, emotional and physical neglect. In the first 24 months of the post, out of 953 pupils, 107 (11.23%) were seen by the nurse, indicating the extent of the problem. Schools in the learning community have found the support extremely effective, *"This support is invaluable to all the primary and secondary schools in helping troubled youngsters... Schools alone cannot support all our pupils..."*

### **Head Teacher, Patna Primary School**

Children needing one-to-one support are assessed initially by gathering information on home, school and social life, and a plan of action is formed in partnership with the child. The nurse uses a range of support tools, including talking and drawing therapy but also has referred a number of children on to other agencies, such as CAMHS, Young Carers, and the GP. *"The nurse has managed to engage some of our most vulnerable young people ... and has kept many of our pupils within their home, school and community."*

### **Member of Integrated Support team**

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## Hawick High School – Girls of Ambition

Hawick High School set up its Girls of Ambition programme to address the problem of female under-performance in the school. The school's results in 2005 showed boys outperforming girls in 11/18 Standard Grades, an outcome in reverse of the national trend. It was thought that this may be caused by the predominance of male culture in the town, and one of the goals of the Girls of Ambition is to encourage young women to raise their aspirations and to change expectations.

The girls of the school came up with a number of projects to promote girls' ambition and aspiration including a special female achievers award, time-out zones for girls, girl-only classes, and a girl-only homework club. An after-school computer club for girls (CC4G) has been introduced which encourages first-year girls to take up ICT, and a popular "Creative Fashion" course, where female students work with Home Economics and Art to design and produce clothing has been established. The highlights of this course are the annual fashion show where the girls model their creations.

The array of positive encouragement for girls has produced some remarkable attitudinal improvements, *"We feel that Girls of Ambition has benefited us in so many ways by boosting our confidence and giving us the inspiration to aim higher in life and achieve at our highest ability."* **Girls at Hawick High School** *"This project has transformed the attitude of girls in the school ... there now exists a culture where girls are aware of their own abilities and have the confidence to achieve ..."* **Enterprise Development Manager, Scottish Borders Council**

Girls' attainment also has improved dramatically. In 2008, girls out-performed the boys in 13/18 Standard grades, their participation in Standard Grade Physics has increased from 32% to 45% whilst Standard Grade Computing rose from 36% to 57%. The number of girls achieving 5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 by the end of S5 has increased from 3% in 2005, to 14% in 2008.

So successful have the improvements been that the project will no longer focus exclusively on girls, but has become *"Students of Ambition"*.





## Springburn Academy – Supporting higher attainment and ambition for S5 and S6 pupils

Springburn Academy is sited in a community with multiple deprivation and a primary challenge is overcoming the lack of ambition, and low expectations that can be found in some pupils and their families. To raise aspirations, a number of Advanced Highers are now offered in the school, and S5 and S6 year pupils are introduced to university environments through Focus West (G.O.A.L.s programme). Strong partnerships have been forged with local universities who offer direct support to the pupils. Caledonian University helps the students with their UCAS personal statements and hosts revision days. Strathclyde University provides mentoring, information and guidance early in S6, as well as access to a Virtual Learning Environment. Parents' evenings are also held at Caledonian University, with parents encouraged to attend study seminars to help them support their young people.

To help S5/S6 year pupils achieve their potential, pupils suggested a mixture of practical operational supports and more learning-focused help. Operational support now in place includes keeping the school library open (and supervised) three days a week for 2 hours in the evening, and having lap-tops available for home use. Additional learning support includes: individual tuition from staff, revision days, study weekends and importantly a course on Learn 2 Learn (L2L). This course, targeted at S1/S2 and S5/S6 pupils is based on a commercially available package, adapted to suit the needs of the school. It reinforces the principles of good learning and teaching, and is delivered by a team of teachers. A knock-on effect is that teachers are now planning and teaching lessons across the curriculum using the 4-stage cycle and active learning strategies used in the course. *"We believe that Learn to Learn is a key element in helping us raise attainment and achievement."* **Head Teacher, Springburn Academy**

The interventions are having a positive impact, with the majority of pupils in S1/S2 indicating that they use L2L techniques in other subjects, as well as outside school. Since 2005, exclusion rates across the school have dropped significantly and attendance rates raised by 3%. The exam results for S5 and S6 pupils have improved with a 7% raise in those achieving five Highers, and a vast increase from 3% to 13% over 5 years in those going into Higher Education.

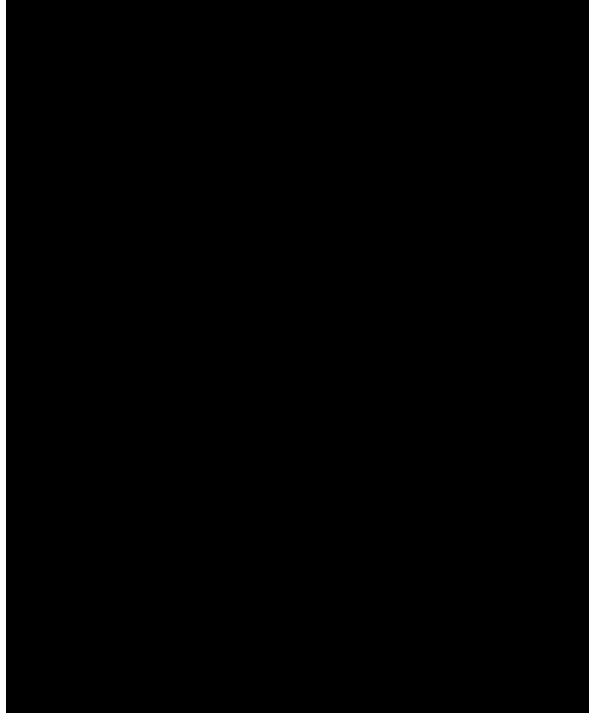
## St Paul's High School – Mapping and celebrating achievement

Pupils from St Paul's High School are challenged by high levels of social deprivation. In order to motivate and engage pupils in danger of disengaging, St Paul's High School has put a special emphasis on learning outside the classroom. A particular aim was to widen horizons and to raise aspirations and ambitions. Activities and interventions undertaken included, enterprise and citizenship field trips and international study visits, out-of-hours clubs and the development of a health and fitness suite.

As pupils' achievements from the "Learning Beyond the Classroom" initiatives developed, it became necessary to maintain a central record of pupil achievement. The aim of this was to capture and quantify the ethos of achievement which recognises the full span of pupils, learning in a way that does justice to them. This was done by establishing an Access database which is updated on a daily basis by a dedicated member of staff. Information is gathered from the SEEMIS system and also from staff passing on information.

The database records the range of activities undertaken, including: pupils' trips out of school, their involvement in projects in school, their extra-curricular activities and details of Citizenship, Leadership and Enterprise activities. It has recently been expanded to allow

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pupils' achievements outside of school to be included, and it contains details of any merit, pastoral and academic certificates given to them at award ceremonies. The database also enables an achievement certificate to be created for each pupil, allowing celebration of success where appropriate.

The mapping process has been very successful, and the system is continuing to evolve. The next step now underway is looking at ways for pupils to use the record to identify what skills they have built up and to determine what activities they would benefit from next. This will be done through Personal, Social, and Health Education.



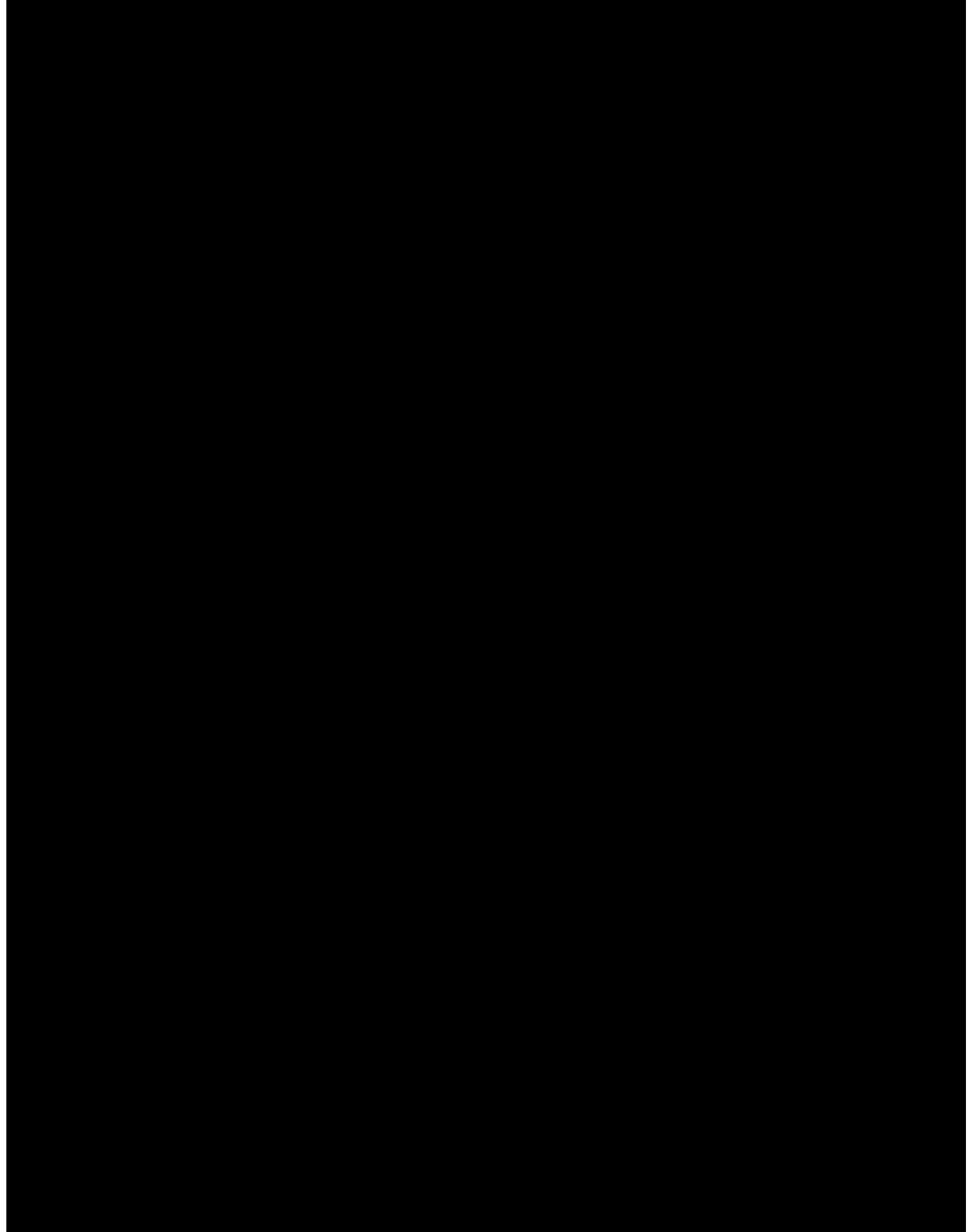
## Conclusion

This booklet has provided a snapshot of activities leading change in Schools of Ambition. These initiatives, however, must be viewed in the context of the full range of activities taking place in these schools, with the schools' transformation often greater than the sum of the individual interventions. Schools successful in leading change have a number of things in common: they have a shared vision for the school, they have engaged and empowered staff, and they have structures in place to evaluate and ensure long-term sustainability of their initiatives. More detail on the process of change in the schools can be found in their Telling the Story portfolios and in the First and Second year Annual Research Reports (see Resources, Appendix 2).

Many innovative interventions have taken place, and much has been learned about different ways of doing things. However, learning from the Schools of Ambition is still continuing and schools who have completed their time on the programme declare that their transformation is just beginning. We shall add further "Telling the Story" portfolios to the Schools of Ambition website as the remaining schools leave the programme.

Many lessons emerging from Schools of Ambition are transforming the learning experiences of their pupils and are directly applicable to all Scottish schools in taking forward the *Curriculum for Excellence* agenda. We will continue to disseminate the good practices on leading change to ensure that all schools in Scotland can be inspired from the lessons emerging.

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## Appendix 1 – Schools on the Schools of Ambition Programme Joined the programme in June 2005

You can find out more information on the schools' stories at [www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition)

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Ms Eileen Caldwell	Schools of Ambition Manager	Burnhouse School	(01501) 678100	eileen.caldwell@wled.org.uk
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Mr Patrick O'Rourke	Head Teacher	Doon Academy School	(01292) 550521	patrick.o'rourke@east-ayrshire.gov.uk
Mr Alan Williamson	Head Teacher	Hawick High School	(01450) 372429	awilliamson@scotborders.gov.uk
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Mr Charles Rooney	Head Teacher	Our Lady & St Patrick's High School	(01389) 762101	mrooney2@ea.w-dunbarton.sch.uk
Mr Jim Hendrie	Head Teacher	St Margaret Mary's Secondary School	(0141) 5820250	JHendrie@st-margaretmarys-sec.glasgow.sch.uk-
Mr Francis Lennon	Head Teacher	St Modan's High School	(01786) 470962	stmodanshs@stirling.gov.uk;
Mr Paul McLaughlin	Head Teacher	St Ninian's High RC High School	(0141) 7621444	pmclaughlin@st-ninians.e-dunbarton.sch.uk;
Ms Lisa Pierotti	Head Teacher	St Paul's High School	(0141) 5820040	headteacher@st-paulshigh.glasgow.sch.uk;
Mr Barry Graham	Head Teacher	Wallace Hall Academy	(01848) 330294	barry.g@alv.dumgal.org.uk

## Joined the programme in April 2006

Expect to see the schools' stories later in 2009 [www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition)

Mr Steven Dempsey	Head Teacher	Brechin High School	(01356) 622135	bredempseys@brechinhigh.angus.sch.uk
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Ms Isabel McIntyre	Head Teacher	St Machar Academy	(01224) 492855	mcintyre@st-macharacademy.aberdeen.sch.uk

## Appendix 2 – Resources Schools of Ambition

1. Schools of Ambition Website Link.  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/index.asp>
2. Annual Research Reports
  - Annual Research Report 2007
  - Annual Research Report 2008<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/about/schoolsofambitionresearch.asp>



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