



THE BEST FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN

# EDUCATING FOR EXCELLENCE

CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY



THE EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL DEBATE



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

**Making it work together**



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## MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



I want to see excellent comprehensive schools, at the heart of local communities. We must give the best life chance to each child, providing the highest quality education, developing talent and creativity across Scotland in urban, rural and island communities. Every child should share a common expectation – a first class school experience.

I am committed to raising standards in Scottish education. I also want Scottish education to realise the potential of every child in every community; closing the opportunity gap.

As I visit schools across Scotland I see examples of excellent learning and teaching, of motivated, creative young people, of achievements often in the face of barriers and disadvantage. Those visits – and my own experiences as a parent – have given me a clear idea of what makes an excellent school. But I recognise that not all schools are yet excellent; not all pupils have schools which offer them all the opportunities they need to get on in life and achieve their full potential. Responses to the National Debate demonstrated broad consensus among teachers, parents and young people about the priorities for improvement.

We will act on these, to:

- ▶ ensure that every pupil's learning needs are met;
- ▶ increase involvement of parents in their children's education;
- ▶ reduce curriculum overload and create more local flexibility and choice;
- ▶ reduce the amount of time taken up by tests and exams;
- ▶ give headteachers more control over the running of their schools; and
- ▶ create bright, modern places to learn.

Our programme sets out the steps we will take to secure these improvements. We are building on solid foundations. We will complete the reforms introduced through the national agreement, "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century", to deliver a better quality of education in Scotland. The Scottish Budget provides historic levels of investment in education for the next 3 years.

The interest in the National Debate showed that people care passionately about education. I am grateful to everyone who took part and look forward to working, in partnership, to delivering a world class education for all Scotland's children.

**Cathy Jamieson, MSP**  
Minister for Education and Young People

## SUMMARY OF KEY PRIORITIES

This document is our action plan for school education. Our key priorities to meet each child's individual needs are:

- › **Increase pupil choice** by reviewing the school curriculum to suit 21st century needs and to reduce substantially the current overload in the 5-14 curriculum. We will establish which subjects might form a well-balanced core around which pupils will have expanded access to choices such as vocational training.
- › **Simplify and reduce the amount of assessment** to cut down the number of tests and exams and the amount of time spent on them. We have started this work, but we will look at more radical options such as only sitting exams when pupils leave school instead of every year from S4.
- › **Bring forward proposals to reduce class sizes and improve pupil/teacher ratios** at critical stages such as P7, S1 and S2, particularly in Maths and English, and have more learning in small groups. We must make sure that pupils will benefit from falling school rolls over the next decade.
- › **Tackle discipline problems and bullying** by fully implementing the recommendations of the Discipline Task Group, reviewing their impact and taking further action where necessary.
- › **Improve school buildings** to create a school estate in which all schools have the right facilities, are well designed, well built and provide a flexible environment which continues to meet future needs.
- › **Give more control over budgets to headteachers** so that the people closest to the children can decide how best to use resources. Introduce greater flexibility for schools and education authorities through local agreements for excellence.
- › **Have teachers work across primary and secondary schools.** We will act to make sure this flexibility is being used to deliver the best education for pupils and help them make the transition from primary to secondary.
- › **Involve parents more in their children's education** by providing new national guidelines giving parents access and by reviewing and reforming the role of School Boards and Parent Teacher Associations.
- › **Strengthen the role of inspection** by delivering clearer and more frequent reports to parents and focusing more directly on schools which need to improve. Consider what additional powers may be required to ensure underperformance is tackled.

## ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

In our response to the National Debate, our starting point is the work the Executive has already completed or has underway. There are real tangible achievements.

- ▶ Class sizes in P1, P2 and P3 have been reduced to 30 or less.
- ▶ A nursery place is now available for every 3- and 4-year old whose parents want it.
- ▶ We have a new agreement with teachers, providing more flexibility and higher professional standards.
- ▶ Classroom assistants have been recruited, ensuring a primary school pupil:adult ratio of 15:1 across all education authorities.
- ▶ We are on track to build or substantially renovate 100 schools by 2003.
- ▶ Schools and education authorities have a new legal obligation to pursue continuous improvement within the framework of National Priorities in education in Scotland.
- ▶ All children now have access to modern information and communications technology.
- ▶ Local authorities and schools now have a legal obligation to plan and implement improvements for disabled pupils' access to schools and education.
- ▶ Provision for pupils with special needs is being transformed.
- ▶ Education authorities are now inspected and the frequency of school inspection has been increased.

These successes have been built on the partnership approach between the Executive, teachers and local authorities. That approach will continue.

## WHAT WAS SAID IN THE NATIONAL DEBATE

In October 2002, we published a summary of the first analysis of the views people sent back to us from the National Debate.<sup>1</sup> The analysis was undertaken by an independent team at the University of Edinburgh, led by Professor Pamela Munn. The vast majority of the people who responded to the Debate believe in the strength of the Scottish comprehensive system and want to build on that. People see education as important, have pride in schools and respect for teachers. Many of our young people find their time at school happy and fulfilling and move into the adult world confident and well-qualified.

But the Debate has also shown us that we have much further to go. People are not complacent; they want improvement. There are concerns about resourcing, the pace of change, discipline, class sizes, the relevance of what children learn and the volume of assessment. They want choices, so that ALL our children and young people share the opportunities currently enjoyed by the majority.

So people do want to see change. Above all, they want a school system in Scotland that is well resourced and flexible enough to meet the needs of the individual child in a system that adapts to the child, not the child to the system. This will require radical new thinking about the way we design, build and manage our schools, about the way teachers teach, about the curriculum, and about the interaction between pupils, parents, community and school. It means making sure that all Scottish schools play a full part in lifelong learning. We must break down the barriers that get in the way of schools working flexibly with informal education, with further education colleges, with employers and with universities.

The people of Scotland want changes to be well managed, with planned change rather than too many new initiatives. They also want to see where we are going and why, and do not expect everything to be changed at once.

<sup>1</sup> For a copy of the summary analysis by Professor Munn and her team, see [www.scotland.gov.uk/nationaldebate/](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/nationaldebate/) or contact The Stationery Office Bookshop, 71 Lothian Road, EDINBURGH, EH3 9AZ. Tel: 0870 606 5566. A more detailed analysis is also available on [www.scotland.gov.uk/nationaldebate/](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/nationaldebate/)

We are setting out our plans for the future of school education in Scotland.

RESPONSE

January 2003

ACTION

## EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

There was very broad agreement in the National Debate – as there was in the submissions to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee’s Inquiry – about the purposes of school education. We share a view that children and young people should have a broad education and develop the skills to be active citizens of a modern Scotland. They should leave school ready for the world of work, training, college or university:

- ▶ literate and numerate;
- ▶ creative and skilled at solving problems;
- ▶ responsible and active members of society, considerate of others;
- ▶ ambitious, enterprising and confident, able to succeed in a world where they value others and are valued for themselves; and
- ▶ motivated to continue learning throughout life.

We are confident that these skills and attributes will prepare our children to play a full role in the Scotland of the future.

## OUR FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVEMENT

We are committed to making sure that the **outcomes** of education in Scotland are the best possible for each and every child. We must work together to meet young people’s aspirations, to close the opportunity gap and realise the potential of every child in Scotland.

The five **National Priorities in Education** (shown in Annex 1) have been approved by the Scottish Parliament.<sup>2</sup> They address: achievement and attainment; framework for learning; inclusion and equality; values and citizenship; and learning for life. The National Debate has demonstrated that they are still the building blocks for Scottish education.

The five National Priorities construct a framework that this National Debate has developed further. We want education authorities and schools to use these principles to guide their planning and for reporting back on what they have achieved. The Executive will be examining how schools and authorities are performing against all of the National Priorities, including exam results. Our initial baseline report will be published in 2003.

## NEXT STEPS

This document sets out the next steps we will take towards achieving our vision. The document details the areas for immediate action, and those areas where further development with parents, local communities, teachers and young people will take place.

<sup>2</sup> Our framework for improvement was set in the *Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000*. This Act introduced the idea of setting ‘National Priorities in Education’ towards which all schools in Scotland should be working. After a consultation exercise, five National Priorities were agreed in December 2000.

# LEARNING AND TEACHING

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID

- ▶ People support a broad but balanced curriculum until the age of 13 or 14.
- ▶ We should continue to encourage and develop a flexible curriculum.
- ▶ Some said that because there is too much assessment, pupils and teachers see education as only about passing exams and getting qualifications.
- ▶ Learning should be fun, exciting, challenging and relevant.

## KEY COMMENTS MADE

- ▶ There should be more emphasis on life skills and learning by experience.
- ▶ Many pupils want to learn more about the world around them.
- ▶ We need to celebrate success and recognise the negative effect of league tables.
- ▶ Assessment should be about feedback to pupils to improve the quality of learning and teaching, not just about the passing of exams and tests.
- ▶ Pupils should have something to show for both formal and informal achievements.

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

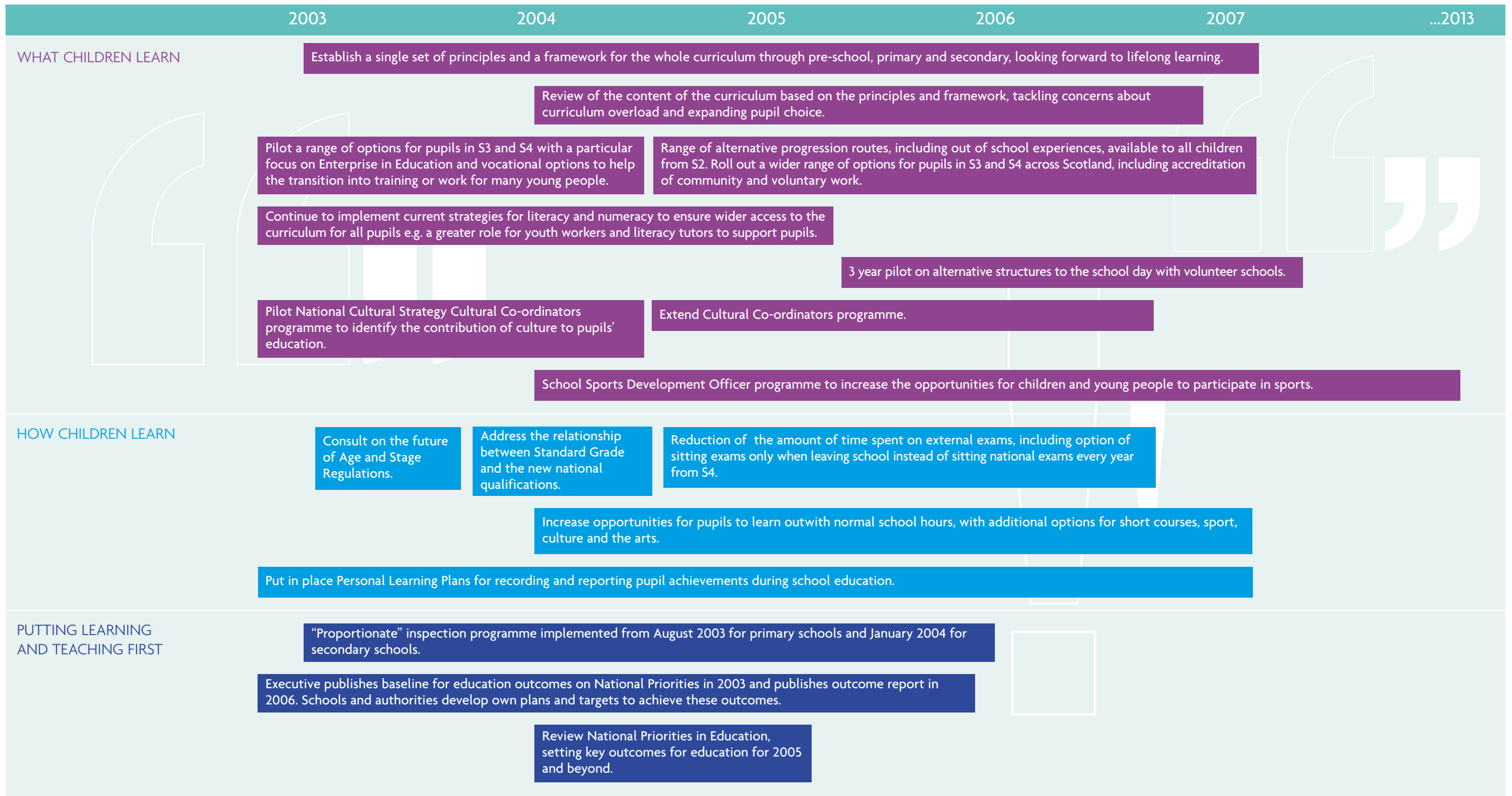
- ▶ Comprehensive education means meeting all pupils' learning needs, not putting all pupils through the same system, delivering according to local needs and priorities. Focus on closing the opportunity gap for young people, especially the most disadvantaged.
- ▶ A better standard of literacy and numeracy for pupils, as the basis for learning.
- ▶ Pupils have more opportunities for flexible learning patterns around a well-balanced core of knowledge and skills, with increased opportunities for out of school learning, including summer study, specialist teaching and on-line learning support. The importance of pupils' learning outside of schools and classrooms recognised.
- ▶ Focus on skills and attitudes as well as knowledge. Subject barriers broken down and links developed between different areas of learning. Use different methods to encourage creativity and active learning.
- ▶ Move away from assessment which simply grades pupils at each stage to assessment which helps pupils understand how they can improve and supports their learning.
- ▶ Closing the opportunity gap: better results for all pupils when leaving school but clear and specific action to improve results for those currently underperforming.
- ▶ Teachers spend time on teaching, not unnecessary bureaucracy.

## FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION

- ▶ **Increase pupil choice by reviewing the school curriculum; our first priority is to reduce the current overload in the 5-14 curriculum.**
  - ▶ **Support schools in using the curriculum more flexibly, around a well-balanced core. Create teaching and learning programmes which better meet pupils' needs. Support pupils who are academically able as well as those who are not.**
- ▶ **Increase access to vocational qualifications and strengthen the links between schools, colleges and workplaces. Take forward the recommendations of the review of Enterprise in Education.**
- ▶ **Simplify the assessment process and the exam system to reduce the number of, and amount of time spent on, tests and exams.**
  - ▶ **Set plans and targets locally against all the National Priorities in Education.<sup>3</sup>**
- ▶ **Change school inspection so that more support is given to schools and authorities to meet their plans and targets.**
- ▶ **Focus effort on education authorities and schools which fail to demonstrate improvement for pupils.**

<sup>3</sup> The current National Priorities in Education are listed at Annex 1.

## LEARNING AND TEACHING: NEXT STEPS







# PUPILS, PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID

- Many responses were about parents taking more interest in and supporting the school and that schools could value parents more.
- With changing working patterns, many parents are expecting schools to take on a different role.
- Most people support the idea of the New Community Schools.
- Young people want to be listened to more.

## KEY COMMENTS MADE

- School facilities could be open for longer.
- Communication and partnership between schools and parents could be improved.
- Classes for parents and more support for parents in understanding school structures and processes.

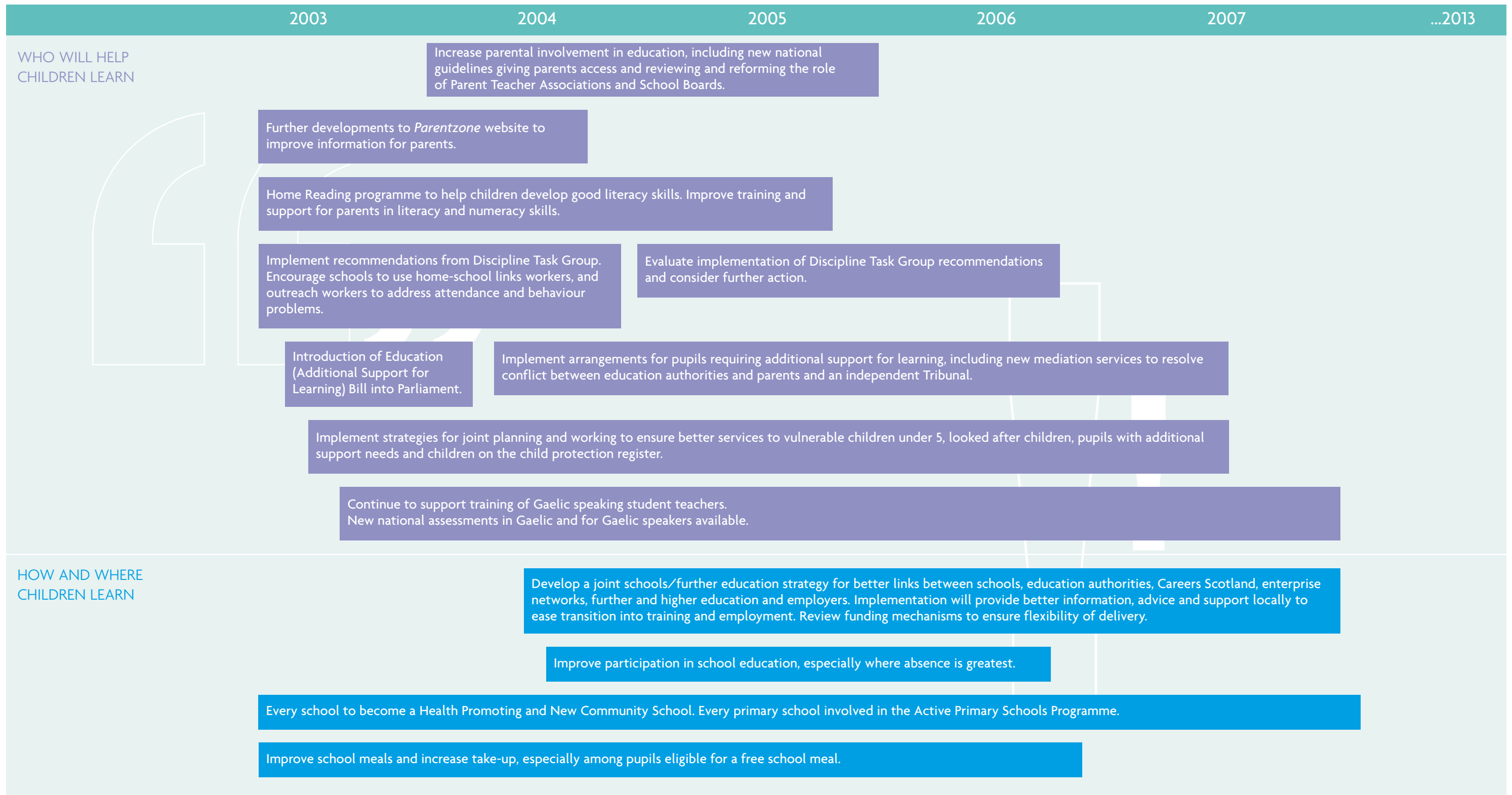
## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- Every school is a centre of excellence, bringing together different services to support pupils and their families.
- Every school adopting the New Community School approach.
- More involvement by local community and businesses in school life.
- Continued support and development of Gaelic.
- Support for learning other languages.
- Parents more involved in making decisions about their children's learning and local education.
- Discipline problems and bullying successfully tackled by pupils, teachers, parents and communities working together.
- Better out of school care within the school environment.

## FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION

- **Tackle discipline problems and bullying through implementing the recommendations of the Discipline Task Group.**
- **Increase parental involvement in our schools, including new national guidelines giving parents access and reviewing and reforming the role of Parent Teacher Associations and School Boards.**
  - **Work with parents to improve school attendance.**
  - **Improve communication with parents about education practice and their role in the decision making process.**
- **Bring information about school education together through a single national website.**
  - **Support schools using websites and email to keep in touch with parents, pupils and the wider community.**
  - **Improve education for children who need additional support for learning, in partnership with their parents and carers.**
  - **Continue the Executive's support for current denominational education.**

## PUPILS, PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY: NEXT STEPS





# WORKING TOGETHER

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID

- › People value the high quality and commitment of teachers.
- › Too many initiatives and a heavy workload are affecting the morale of teachers and their ability to focus on high quality teaching.

## KEY COMMENTS MADE

- › More opportunities for pupils with special talents.
- › More team working between teachers, social workers and medical services to help support young people.
- › Improve initial training and continuous professional development for teachers.
- › Smaller class sizes and more qualified staff.
- › More support for pupils with special needs.

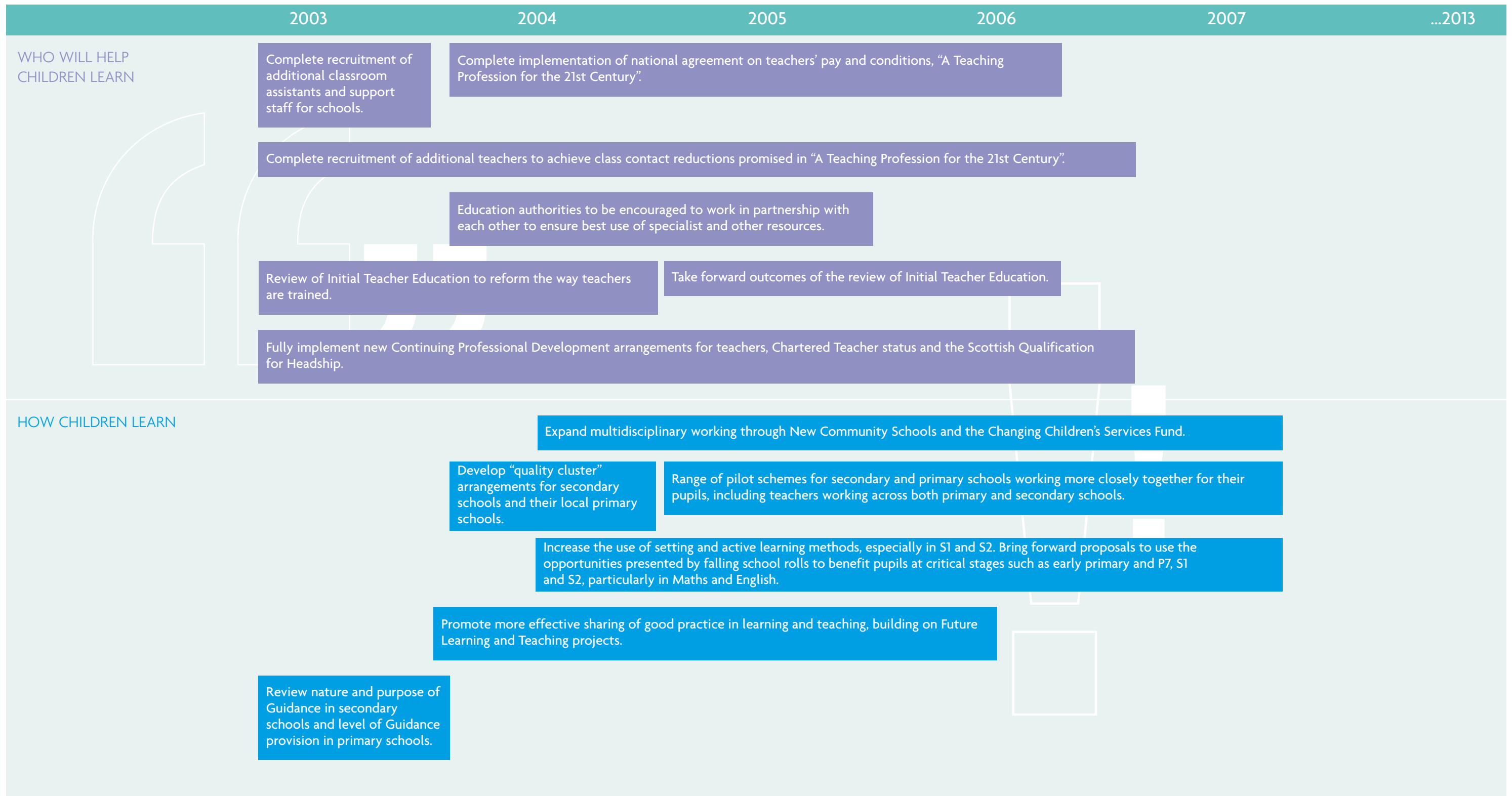
## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- › Teachers to lead the team delivering school education.
- › The right balance of staff so that pupils can spend more time learning in small groups and get the attention they need.
- › Support staff will have a greater role in working with groups of pupils and freeing teachers of administrative burdens.
- › Teachers working across primary and secondary schools. Ensure specialist knowledge and skills are available to all schools.
- › Promote sharing of expertise and best practice by teachers at local and national level.

## FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION

- › **Promote more small group learning to ensure that we meet the individual needs of all children.**
  - › **Bring forward proposals to reduce class sizes and improve pupil/teacher ratios at critical stages such as P7, S1 and S2, particularly in Maths and English.**
    - › **Make best use of specialist teachers in both primary and secondary schools.**
  - › **Improve transition from pre-5 to primary, from primary to secondary school and from school into work or lifelong learning.**
  - › **Improve “quality cluster” arrangements between secondary schools and associated primary schools.**
    - › **Enable teachers to work across primary and secondary schools.**
      - › **Review and reform Initial Teacher Education.**

## WORKING TOGETHER: NEXT STEPS





# MODERN SCHOOLS

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID

- ▶ There were many concerns about lack of resources.
- ▶ For pupils especially, the physical environment of the schools is very important. Some school spaces do not assist effective learning and teaching.
- ▶ Ageing buildings make pupils feel that education is not valued by society.
- ▶ The benefits of out of school learning and the importance of other facilities were widely recognised. Pupils in particular mentioned the benefits of school trips and work placements.

## KEY COMMENTS MADE

- ▶ Teachers want more control over how school funds are spent.
- ▶ Pupils want more resources for new furniture, more books, more computers, improved playgrounds and personal lockers.
- ▶ Bigger classrooms and better sports facilities were common suggestions.

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

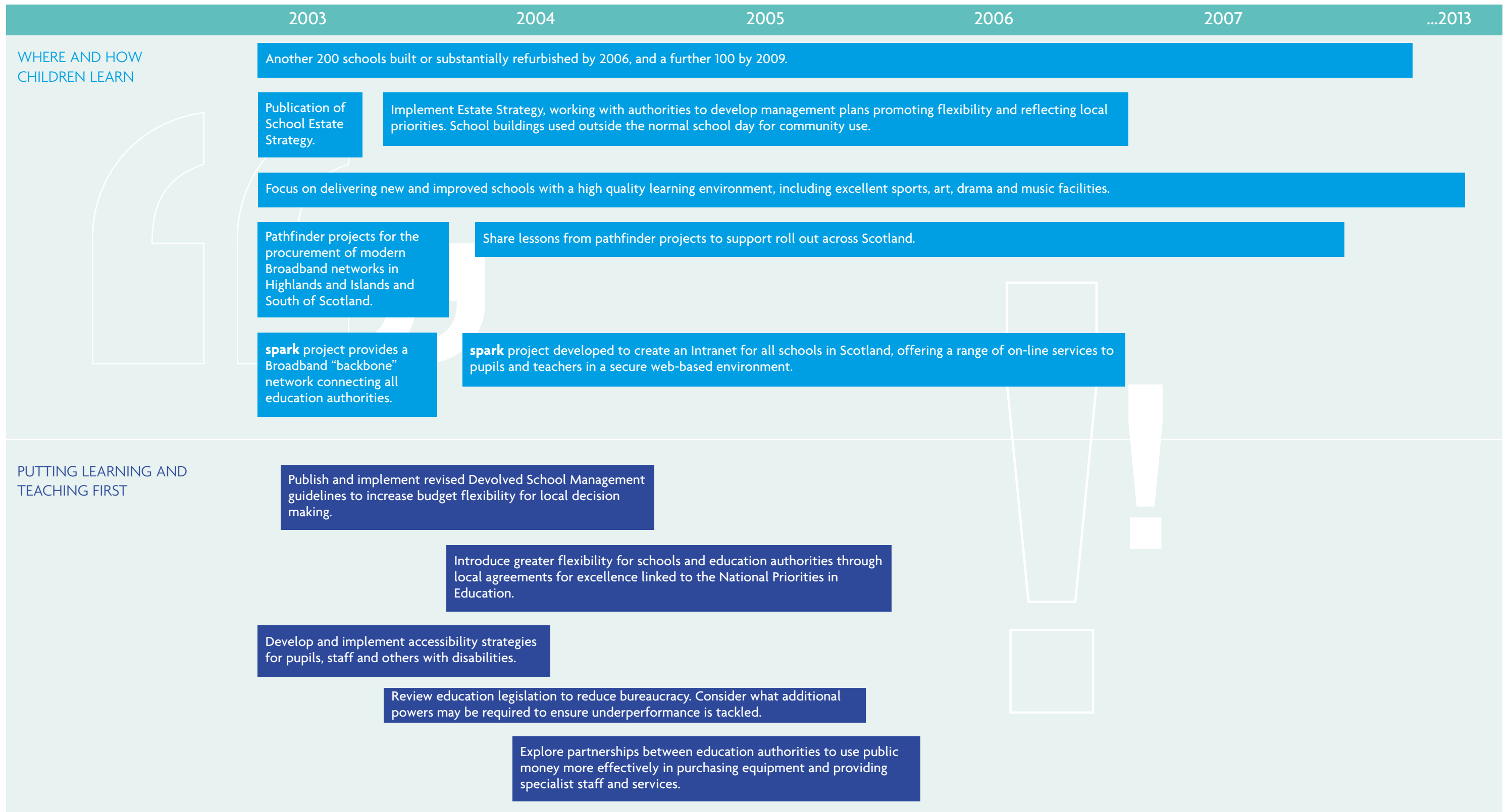
- ▶ Every school as a centre of excellence in terms of accommodation and facilities.
- ▶ Excellent school design across Scotland.
- ▶ Effective local management of schools, with headteachers in control of their budgets and taking decisions for their school.
- ▶ Use modern technology to support learning and teaching. Provide school managers with modern business skills and equipment.
- ▶ Improved facilities for study support and after school activity.
- ▶ Improved accessibility for pupils, staff and others with disabilities.

## FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION

- ▶ **Improve the condition of school buildings and develop new schools to create a school estate in which all schools have the right facilities, are well designed, well built and provide a flexible environment which continues to meet future needs.**
  - ▶ **Complete the programme to build or substantially refurbish 300 schools by 2009.**
  - ▶ **Work with education authorities and other stakeholders to plan how to make further improvements to school buildings, and make sure that they are well maintained.**
  - ▶ **Produce revised guidelines on Devolved School Management, with greater control over budgets to headteachers. Introduce greater flexibility for schools and education authorities through local agreements for excellence.**
  - ▶ **Consider what additional powers may be required to ensure underperformance is tackled.**
- ▶ **Maximise the potential of Broadband and other modern communications technology to enhance learning in schools. Build a single Scottish Intranet for all schools to provide on-line services to pupils and teachers.**
  - ▶ **Use the Scottish Intranet to extend availability of distance learning packages.**



## MODERN SCHOOLS: NEXT STEPS





## ANNEX 1

### NATIONAL PRIORITIES IN EDUCATION

The National Priorities in Education were established in 2000. They set the framework for schools and education authorities to plan education for their pupils. The Executive will monitor progress against those plans. The National Priorities will be reviewed by 2005.

They are defined under the following headings:

- ▶ **Achievement and Attainment:** to raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results;
- ▶ **Framework for Learning:** to support and develop the skills of teachers, the self discipline of pupils and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to teaching and learning;
- ▶ **Inclusion and Equality:** to promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser used languages;
- ▶ **Values and Citizenship:** to work with parents to teach pupils respect for themselves and for one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society, and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society; and
- ▶ **Learning for Life:** to equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition.



Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and large print formats and in community languages, please contact:

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এই ডকুমেন্ট-এর (দলিল) অতিরিক্ত কপি, অডিও এবং বড়ো ছাপার অক্ষর আকারে এবং সম্প্রদায়ের ভাষায় অনুরোধের মাধ্যমে পাওয়া যাবে, অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন:

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