

Armadale Academy

Curriculum for Excellence – Education for Change

‘It’s all changed since I was at school.’

We all have memories of what it was like for us at school – what we were taught and the kinds of lessons we had – and will notice changes for our own children. Sometimes our children have greater knowledge and skills in some areas than we have!

“If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterdays, we rob them of tomorrow.” – John Dewey

As times change, education and schools have to adapt to keep up with changes taking place in the world around us:

- different work opportunities and patterns
- new technology and growth of the internet
- environmental concerns
- health and wellbeing issues
- increased contact with different cultures and travel.

In 2002 the Scottish Government set up a group to review education in Scotland. The review aimed to simplify and prioritise the current curriculum and encourage more learning through experiences. From this *Curriculum for Excellence* was born. *Curriculum for Excellence* is not a single document, rather a new way of looking at the curriculum that builds on best existing practices in Scottish education.

The group’s task was to identify **the purposes of education** for children and young people from the age of 3 to 18.

UNESCO describes the aims of education to be about:

- **Learning** to be
- **Learning** to learn
- **Learning** to live with others
- **Learning** to do.

The hope for every young person is that they should become:

- **confident individuals**
- **successful learners**
- **responsible citizens**
- **effective contributors** to society and at work.

Children start learning before birth and have already learnt an immense amount before they start school. The curriculum should provide the support, structure and direction to young people’s learning so that they develop in all of these four areas.

What do we mean by ‘Curriculum’?

The **curriculum** describes what children and young people do in school. In primary school it includes the lessons which develop some of their basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics and, in secondary school, the subject areas (geography, history, languages etc) and the courses which lead to examinations and qualifications.

Experiences and outcomes: what will this mean for schools and your child?

As the draft experiences and outcomes were published we have been considering all that we do and how it contributes to children and young people developing the four above-mentioned capacities.

Learning in the Academy takes place through a wide range of **planned experiences**. These include environmental, scientific, technological, historical, social, economic, political, mathematical and linguistic contexts, the arts, culture and sports.

Sometimes the experiences may be linked to particular vocational or other specialised settings. Pupils will also learn through the day-to-day experiences of the life of the school community, with its

values and social contact, and from out-of-school activities, events and celebrations. Taken together, these activities provide a motivating and rich blend of experiences which promote learning.

These experiences are not unfocused. They are designed to achieve **specific outcomes** in terms of knowledge, skills or understandings that will show how our young people are developing and progressing.

All staff now have responsibility for literacy, numeracy and the health and well being of our pupils and the delivery of the outcomes and experiences related to these areas.

What will teachers need to consider when planning for the new curriculum?

When planning activities and experiences, teachers have to ensure that the following principles are applied:

The principles for curriculum design

- **Challenge and enjoyment**
- **Progression**
- **Personalisation and Choice**
- **Relevance**
- **Breadth**
- **Depth**
- **Coherence**

What is happening in Armadale Academy?

- A range of actions are moving forward the purposes of the new curriculum. The key elements have been:
 - All staff are familiar with the 4 capacities and their own responsibilities to develop these capacities in pupils through their learning and teaching approaches.
 - Assessment is for Learning approaches underpin all teaching practice.
 - Classroom practice is focused on the individual pupil.
 - Pupils continue to be offered wider opportunities enhancing curriculum delivery through activities, trips, visits, enterprise activities, etc, relevant to subject and cross curricular areas.
 - Departmental reviews have been carried out to consider existing practices against the purposes and principles to ensure methods and content achieve the purpose of developing the four capacities. This led to the inclusion of further initiatives in Department Improvement Plans.
 - A *Curriculum for Excellence Working Group* has been established to oversee the implementation along with sub groups coordinating Numeracy and Literacy across the Curriculum.
 - **Numeracy across the Curriculum** – an audit took place across all subject areas and a strategic plan is now being developed to involve all staff in the delivery of these outcomes and experiences. This will include a booklet to parents.
 - **Literacy across the Curriculum** – an audit of S1 courses is taking place. This will be followed by the implementation of a strategic plan to standardise spelling, grammar and reading practices across the school.
 - **Health and Wellbeing** - Health Promotion Status level 2 has been achieved, the school has had it's annual Health Fair and all departments have been audited against the new Health and Well being outcomes.
 - Departments have been working in partnership to develop collaborative *Curriculum for Excellence* projects. Current examples include:
 - A numeracy project looking at organising a holiday for a family to Florida including all the travel, money and accommodation implications as well as itineraries.

- A joint project with the Primary 7 pupils at our cluster primary schools and many of the Academy departments looking at the novel *Good Night Mr Tom* and placing it in context.
- The 'Holocaust Experience', including a visit to a concentration camp, RMPS, History, Geography and English input and a final presentation during assemblies to all year groups.
- Courses being aligned across Departments so that the same topics are taught at the same time in various subject areas.
- Ongoing In-Service both in-school and at local and National level.
- Teachers have engaged with the draft experiences and outcomes and await the final version of curriculum documents to enable them to move to the next stage in preparation for implementation, including adjusting and refining our curriculum.
- 'Skills for work' courses being developed and introduced.
- ICT further integrated into learning and teaching approaches.
- Individuals, Departments, Faculties and the school Senior Management Team have participated in the National Qualifications consultation and will engage with the new arrangements for assessment and qualifications as soon as released in preparation for implementation.

What will the outcomes for pupils be?

As previously indicated:

- Pupils will be engaged in learning opportunities which are motivating, relevant, more active and meet their individual needs.
- Pupils will be confident about their next steps in learning
- Learning in future will offer more personalisation and choice.
- Progress may be measured in a range of fashions, not necessarily just by examination.

When will these changes happen?

From 2008-09, *Curriculum for Excellence* will be phased in to replace the present 5–14 curriculum.

The draft experiences and outcomes for all curriculum areas were released for discussion and feedback in 2008.

Final Versions of the outcomes and experiences are due to be published in the Spring of 2009.

Pupils who join us in session 2010/11 will be the first group to experience the new national qualifications, with the first presentations in 2014

How can I get involved as a parent?

Look out for information about any changes that may be taking place, especially in the school newsletter and on the website.

You will be able to find out more by asking about these changes at parents' evenings. Once the final details are firmed up there will be special evenings organised to discuss the changes in the curriculum.

Further information can be found at:

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/>

or

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone/CurriculumGuide/CurriculumForExcellence/Whyisitchanging.asp>