

## **The Implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. December 2012**

Dear Parent/Carer

You will be aware that schools in Scotland are in the process of revising the curriculum in line with the national Curriculum for Excellence guidelines. The purpose of this letter is to provide clarification to parents/carers, pupils and employers on the changes taking place in our schools. It is understandable that there may be some concerns and the information below is designed to both inform and reassure parents/carers, pupils and employers about these ongoing changes.

All Aberdeenshire Secondary Schools are modifying their curriculum in similar ways in accordance with National and Aberdeenshire Council Policy. Neighbouring authorities are also changing their structure.

The questions and answers below aim to explain some key facts about the new curriculum in our secondary schools.

**What is the Curriculum?** The curriculum is now defined as all the experiences that pupils have in schools. This includes curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, the ethos and life of the school and opportunities for personal achievement. This recognises that school is much more than just traditional subjects and qualifications.

**How is the Curriculum Organised?** The curriculum is organised into eight 'curriculum areas'. Within these, what pupils learn is described by a number of 'experiences and outcomes'. There is also a focus on literacy, numeracy and health wellbeing across all curriculum areas.

**How are Pupils Assessed?** Pupils are assessed at different levels from early level in pre-school and primary one, through the fourth level usually in secondary three. At each of the levels there are appropriate experiences and outcomes which can be used to judge a child's progress through the levels. In the senior years the majority of pupils are assessed by the National Scottish Qualifications Authority examination system.

**How is the Curriculum Structured?** The curriculum is divided into two parts - the Broad General Education from pre-school/nursery to the end of secondary three is followed by a combined Senior Phase in secondary fourth, fifth and sixth year. This has the effect of keeping the curriculum broader for a longer period of time, before specialisation in the Senior Phase. The joint fourth, fifth, sixth year structure allows schools to offer a more flexible and broader curriculum than was previously possible. This structure will be in place in all Aberdeenshire schools by session 2014/15.

**What is the Broad General Education?** The Broad General Education involves all pupils in first to third year studying experiences and outcomes in all eight curriculum areas. During the Broad General Education schools may offer pupils the opportunity to personalise their curriculum by studying some subjects in more depth. Towards the end of third year all pupils will complete a profile of their achievements and discuss options for the Senior Phase of their education.

**What is the Senior Phase?** The Senior Phase is when pupils will select and study National Qualifications courses at an appropriate level for them. Pupils will choose courses towards the end of third, fourth and fifth year for study during the following session. From fourth to

sixth year pupils will be able to build a portfolio of qualifications at different levels relevant to their individual needs. Senior Phase classes could contain fourth, fifth and sixth year pupils.

**How many Qualifications will be Studied?** Typically, but not exclusively, pupils will study six National Qualifications in S4 and five in S5. S6 pupils will follow a more personalised curriculum with a balance of academic and achievement opportunities to meet their individual needs.

**Why not start Qualifications in Third Year?** National guidelines make it clear that for most pupil's third year courses should be based on the level 3 and 4 experiences and outcomes and not National Qualifications. Some of the learning in S3 can be considered as part of the notional 160 hours for N4/5 courses. However, the experience in S3 needs to keep options open and avoid reducing young people's choices of the qualifications which they wish to study as they progress through the Senior Phase.

**How are Qualifications Changing?** After presentation in May 2013 Access and Standard Grade examinations will no longer be available. They will be replaced in 2014 by National Qualifications from National 1 through to National 5. National 3, 4 and 5 replace Standard Grade Foundation, General and Credit qualifications respectively. Higher courses will be revised for first presentation in 2015 and Advance Higher for 2016 completing the revision of National Qualifications. The table below shows these changes:

Old System up to May 2013	Revised System from May 2014
Standard Grade - Foundation Level	National 3
Standard Grade - General Level	National 4
Standard Grade – Credit Level	National 5
Higher	Higher
Advanced Higher	Advanced Higher

**How this will affect entry into Further or Higher Education?** Universities in Scotland are currently revising their entry requirements to reflect the changes in the curriculum. Highers will remain the key entry requirement to university courses while young people's wider experience and achievements are becoming increasingly important to universities in selecting students.

We hope that you have found the information contained in this letter helpful in understanding the positive changes being introduced across all Aberdeenshire schools.

More detailed information can be accessed from your local school through the Head Teacher or at the following web site:

[www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/index.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/index.asp)

Yours sincerely,



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Aberdeenshire Council



Director of Education, Learning & Leisure  
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