

East Ayrshire Council

Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

Planning, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guidance



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East Ayrshire Planning, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guidance

Introduction

East Ayrshire Education Service is committed to achieving the highest possible quality of provision and positive outcomes for all our children and young people and their families.

This guidance supports our East Ayrshire Community Plan 2015-30 Vision which states that:

“East Ayrshire will be a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs.”

Our aim is for children and young people of East Ayrshire to have the best possible opportunities to develop skills and attitudes, which will serve them well throughout their lives. These include the ability to be problem solvers, to be enterprising, creative and adaptable to a changing environment, to apply new knowledge, to work and interact well with others and to be resilient in the face of adverse circumstances. Our success in this aim will depend on how far all involved feel secure and valued and the extent to which we all learn how to think effectively in different contexts.

This Planning, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guidance reflects current educational thinking and has been written for all of us involved in interacting with children and young people within East Ayrshire.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) allows for greater opportunity and choice to help young people realise their individual talents. This guidance endorses, for our young people and staff, the purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence. It is anticipated that this guidance will inform our practice and contribute to career long professional learning for all our staff.

By making learning challenging, active and engaging we can support all our children and young people to participate fully in the learning experiences provided and help us to deliver excellence and equity in line with the national Scottish Attainment Challenge mission. The four contexts for learning provides a framework for planning high quality experiences for all our learners in curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, ethos and life of the school and opportunities for personal achievement. Working in partnership with others, we can develop a flexible curriculum, suited to the needs and aspirations of our children and young people, which reflects the local context.

Central to this guidance is the vision and key priorities of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) Improvement Plan 2023:

Vision

- Excellence through raising attainment and improving outcomes: ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to shape their future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors;
- Achieving equity: ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.



Key Priorities

- Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
- Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people
- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy

Teachers are learners. GTCS standards are clear that we have a professional responsibility to improve our skills and knowledge and should actively seek out learning opportunities to do so. Local regional and national professional learning offers such opportunities for learning through reading and reflection, dialogue and 'doing'. Within the Self-Improving school model, our senior establishment leaders have a crucial facilitating role to play in collegial activity to achieve the aims of our establishment improvement plans. The purpose of this guidance is to give direction to all partners involved in supporting our learners in East Ayrshire. It is to support and promote effective learning, teaching and assessment practice.



Effective Learning and Teaching

How we teach is as important as **what** we teach. Our focus will continue to be on improving learning experiences and pedagogy by building on work we already do and by responding to new research. Our first step is the curriculum - the 'what' of learning in relation to knowledge and skills. Each school community should develop a rationale for its curriculum, one not only based on the seven principles of curriculum design: challenge and enjoyment; breadth, progression, depth; personalisation and choice; coherence and relevance, but also on the values and needs of those who make up the community. Consideration should also be given to Developing the Young Workforce.

Good health and wellbeing is central to effective learning and preparation for successful independent living. Learning through health and wellbeing promotes confidence, independent thinking and positive attitudes and dispositions. It is the responsibility of every teacher to contribute to learning and development in this area. (Building the Curriculum 1) No learner of any age can be fully effective if he or she feels unhappy, or troubled or insecure. It is the responsibility of our school communities - school staff, young people, parents and carers, professionals from partner agencies and others in the local community to work together to ensure that each of our learners feels safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Young people believe, and research consistently shows, that the teacher has a crucial role in this process. Quite simply, the teacher makes the difference.

How do we plan for successful learning?

Time and consideration needs to be given to the planning process at all levels, taking into account the **totality of the curriculum** as mapped out within the [Broad General Education \(BGE\) Experiences and Outcomes](#) and [SQA Course Specifications](#) for senior phase. This means that planning for effective learning applies beyond 'timetabled classes' and takes account of a child's or young person's learning both in and out with the 'classroom' (for example, through enterprise activities, health and wellbeing related work and special events).

The key messages within the [CfE Statement for Practitioners](#) (Page 2) provides further guidance on planning using the Experiences and Outcomes.

Effective planning is based on our professional reflection and discussion – moderation in action! Effective planning will show progression of knowledge and skills, including skills for learning, life and work. To support this in our establishments East Ayrshire has developed progression pathways and planners.

[Literacy and English Planning](#)

[Numeracy and Mathematics Planning](#)

[HWB Planning](#)

[Expressive Arts, Languages, Religious and Moral Education, Sciences, Social Subjects and Technologies Planning](#)

Our children and young people benefit from learning and teaching approaches adapted to suit the purpose and context of their learning. One of the key features of effective learning environments is a sense of shared purpose: a community. High quality learning and teaching requires our staff to respond flexibly to the needs of learners. We can use a range of strategies and approaches including:

- East Ayrshire Literacy
- East Ayrshire Numeracy



- Interdisciplinary Learning
- Play Pedagogy
- Outdoor Learning
- Assessment for Learning (Tapestry)
- Effective and creative use of digital technologies
- Nurture
- Neurosequential Model in Education (NME)
- Communication Friendly Environments
- Metacognition
- Self-regulation
- Gradual release of responsibility
- Making Learning Visible

In summary, our learning and teaching strategies and approaches should be flexible and creative, allowing for personalisation of learning, choice and challenge and ensure that children and young people are at the centre of all our planning in order to accommodate the diverse range of needs that exist

Our Senior Phase planning should build on the broad general education and should include a range of learner pathways appropriate to the school's context, across the four contexts for learning. The Education Scotland document [Progression from the Broad General Education \(BGE\) to Senior Phase](#) provides further guidance.

High quality teaching is a key factor in achieving successful learning. Learners learn best when they are taught by staff who are professional, enthusiastic, passionate, knowledgeable and skilled. It also includes our teaching environments and teaching approaches. Central elements of effective teaching should include:

- creating a positive, supportive and nurturing climate for learning where effective organisation is evident
- an ethos of aspiration and achievement for all
- acknowledging and building on prior learning (progression on knowledge and skills)
- setting clear learning intentions (focusing on learning, not tasks and activities) which are shared with and understood by our learners
- negotiating the success criteria with our learners which are revisited throughout the learning episode
- high expectations and high level of challenge with appropriate pace to take account of the variety of our learners' needs (differentiation)
- using effective questioning to challenge learners thinking and promote curiosity
- ensure effective use of a wide range of learning and teaching approaches appropriate to the lesson
- allowing our learners to take responsibility for their learning, where appropriate
- allowing our children and young people to demonstrate their understanding in a range of ways – teaching others, writing, presenting, etc.
- utilising a range of assessment approaches appropriate to the task including peer and self-assessment
- evaluating the learning – a plenary session focused on dialogue with our learners
- ensure all our learners are encouraged and supported to evaluate their own learning and plan their next steps
- giving clear and specific advice to our learners about how to improve (assessment/feedback)



We aim to provide an inclusive approach to learning, teaching and assessment. In our inclusive schools or communities, we strive to know our children and young people well. We aim to recognise and value the richness of our pupil diversity and develop appropriate responses to this.

When planning learning we should consider how we can evidence learners' progress through effective assessment approaches.

Our local authority and school self-evaluation has a focus on the quality of learning and teaching.



Assessment

“The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach them accordingly.” D. Ausubel

When planning, learning, teaching and assessment:

- Assessment should be considered as an integral part of the planning process
- Experiences and outcomes support planning with the [National Benchmarks](#) supporting assessment in the BGE.
- Assessment should be drawn from both ongoing and periodic assessment
- Assessment should consider breadth, challenge and application of learning
- The learner is at the heart of the process. Assessment approaches should allow the learner to demonstrate how well and how much they have learned

‘Practice is most effective where teachers use a range of assessment approaches flexibly to identify strengths, learning needs and appropriate support.....’ (Building the Curriculum 5)

Assessment is used to:

- help build learners’ understanding of themselves as learners as part of learning and teaching
- monitor and track progress in learning to report at all systems levels (class, establishment, Education Group, authority and national)
- provide information to learners, their parents and carers on learners’ progress and achievements
- provide information for use beyond the school, including for qualifications and awards

Assessment is a powerful lever to drive forward progress in learning. Our approaches to assessment must build capacity throughout the system to allow our children and young people to improve and progress.

Assessment takes place as part of our **ongoing** learning and teaching, **periodically** and at points of **transition**. Information gathered in this way provides us with a holistic view of a child’s or young person’s progress.

Assessment involves us in high quality interactions, based on our thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses and includes opportunities for our children to demonstrate their learning across the four contexts for learning: Ethos and life of the schools and community, Curriculum and areas and subjects, Interdisciplinary learning and Opportunities for personal achievement.

When planning assessment, it is crucial that we consider how to strengthen the ability of our children and young people to plan and assess their own learning and develop assessment models that take into consideration the strengths and needs of learners.

The range of assessments we use include diagnostic, formative and summative assessment. This range provides our children and young people, parents and staff with an accurate picture of how learning is progressing and shape future learning experiences.

Our teacher judgements will be supported by evidence of learning from:

- Day to day learning (a range of formative assessment approaches both formal and informal)
- Specific assessment tasks, including the use of high quality assessments
- Local authority assessment tools



- Standardised Assessments, including [Scottish National Standardised Assessments \(SNSA\)](#), examinations and, where appropriate, commercially produced standardised assessments

Considering the above, all our establishments should develop their own framework for assessment based on authority guidance and on their local context.

The Senior Phase of a young person's education builds firmly on the broad general education. The values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence will follow through from earlier phases of education. Assessment in the senior phase will focus on planned learning across the curriculum. A substantial part of assessment will contribute to our young people gaining formal qualifications and awards. Those of our young people who have an identified additional support need will be able to have special arrangements made in order for them to fully access assessments for qualifications. These arrangements are granted on the bases of evidence.

Key components of assessment include:

- Deciding what to assess and reviewing/reducing the assessment burden where this exists (hotspots?)
- Planning for assessment when planning learning
- Identifying what learners can do and what their next steps will be
- Being clear and consistent in our assessment models
- Knowing where the evidence is – you don't always need to collect it all in one place!
- Adopting a 'high impact, bureaucracy light' approach
- ***Remember, improving children's progress happens in practice not on paper!***

National Assessment Summit, Edinburgh 2018

Further guidance and support in relation to developing approaches to assessment can be found in the [East Ayrshire Assessment in the BGE Toolkit](#).



Monitoring and Tracking Progress

Our systematic approach to effectively monitoring and tracking the attainment and achievement of all our learners is crucial to the success of our schools. An overview of our children's progress is provided using a range of information, data and evidence from day to day learning and teaching, and summative assessments. We use the information gathered to build as complete a picture as possible about each individual child. Our school teams are able to identify and support children and young people to remove any barriers to their learning. It also informs our planning to ensure our children's needs are met and they attain as highly as possible.

Effective planning for learning, teaching and assessment, using the [Experiences and Outcomes and the Benchmarks](#), and regular moderation within and across our schools, will ensure information on progress within and across CfE levels is valid and reliable. As a result of manageable processes to monitor and evaluate our learners' progress, our schools will have clear information on learners' attainment across all curriculum areas.

In evaluating and/or reviewing how we approach monitoring and tracking our children's progress, it is helpful to use the features of highly effective practice and challenge questions in [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#).

The local authority will support primary schools with the use of our [tracking and monitoring system](#); support schools in their analysis and use of data as required; collect achievement of a level data from our P1, P4, P7 and S3 pupils for submission to Scottish Government on an annual basis and collect tracking progress data from P2, P3, P5, P6, S1 and S2 to support our schools to measure progress and achievement over time.

Establishments should ensure that working time agreements take into account time required for tracking and monitoring activities, track and monitor progress of all our learners using the [EA Education Profile, Tracking and Monitoring System](#), with reference to the [Progression to National Standards Guidance document](#) and [Video](#), and record achievement of a level data for submission to the Scottish Government

Our practitioners should gather, use and analyse a range of information to support judgements on learners' progress, attainment and achievement, engage in regular tracking and monitoring discussions and update records and use the national [Benchmarks](#) when making judgements on achievement of level in literacy and numeracy.



Moderation

Moderation is the term used to describe approaches to arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations for the broad general education. It involves our teachers and other professionals as appropriate, working together, drawing on guidance and exemplification and building on standards and expectations. The purpose of moderation is to achieve consistency of understanding and application of standards across our authority, thus building confidence in teachers'/professionals' judgements and ensuring continuity and progression for our learners.

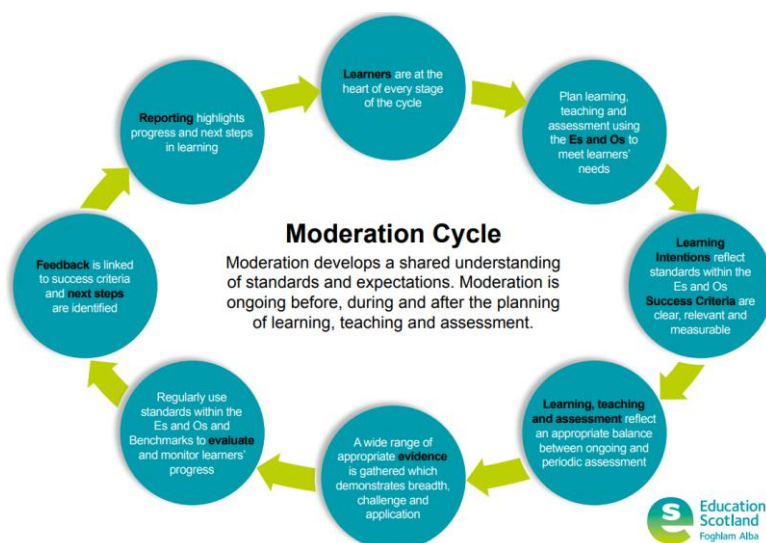
Moderation is integral to our planning learning, teaching and assessment. It is a process, not a one-off event, which involves high levels of professional dialogue. Moderation involves discussions about breadth, challenge and application at every stage. It is an ongoing process and through professional dialogue and collaboration, moderation ensures a shared understanding of standards on which to base our teacher professional judgement. The following [Professional Dialogue Prompt Questions in the Progression to National Standards Guidance document](#) can be used to support professional dialogue in relation to moderation.

Across East Ayrshire schools, we have Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs) and Leaders of Learning (LoL) who are trained to support moderation activity in individual establishments, education groups and across the authority. The QAMSOs and LoLs also participate in SWEIC moderation activity and sharing practice events.

Our East Ayrshire Assessment Co-coordinators provide ongoing support for moderation to our schools/Education Groups; promote and support the work of the QAMSO and LoL teams across their Education Groups, the authority and RIC; provide regular updates to our Head Teachers on QAMSO work; update local resources in line with national publications and support the work of the SWEIC Getting it Right For All Learners workstream.

Our recommendation is that establishments include PLTA and moderation on school improvement plans as appropriate; ensure that working time agreements reflect the national guidance on moderation and collegiate working – including time at the planning stage of the cycle; support staff to understand and meet the expected standards in moderation as outlined in GTCS Standard for full Registration and use East Ayrshire and National self-evaluation tools on the moderation hub to see how effective their moderation is.

The [Education Scotland Moderation Hub](#) provides further guidance on all aspects of the Planning, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Cycle.





Support for our practitioners on all aspects of the planning, learning, teaching, assessment and moderation cycle is also available on the [East Ayrshire PLTA and Moderation blog](#).

Self-evaluation across East Ayrshire establishments focuses on the quality of learning and teaching and the wider educational experiences provided for our children and young people.

Teacher Professional Judgement

The assessment of our children's progress throughout primary school and in secondary S1 - S3 is based on teachers' views: their professional judgement. At the end of each school year, teachers are asked to submit to Scottish Government levels of attainment for our pupils at all stages P1 to S3 with the key stages of P1, P4, P7 and S3 forming the national ACEL collection and data from all stages being used to support cohort tracking and the setting of appropriate local stretch aim. Our teachers will make those judgements based on their own professional knowledge and understanding, informed by how each individual child has been progressing over the full year. East Ayrshire has developed a shared tracking language and the [East Ayrshire Profile, Monitoring and Tracking System](#) to support school tracking across Early to Third Level in the BGE.

Reporting on progress

The purpose of reporting is to support and improve learning. It should be an on-going process, which provides clear information on a learner's strengths, areas for development and specifically what needs to be done to ensure continued progress and improved standards of achievement.

As much as possible, our learners should be involved in the reporting process through on-going reflection and dialogue about their learning. It is important that reporting fully involves and values the role of our parents and carers. Our schools provide information on how parents can support learning at home. Through quality engagement with parents, schools develop effective means of reporting that emphasise the quality of engagement rather than an over-reliance on lengthy paper-based approaches.

To ensure that our learners make continuous progress in their learning, reporting opportunities need to be regular, meaningful, purposeful and on-going throughout the academic year. The [Key Messages in Relation to Reporting and Features of Highly Effective Practice document](#) provides further guidance.

Professional Learning

The suite of professional learning and development opportunities, offered across East Ayrshire, supports us to continue to develop as accomplished, reflective and enquiring professionals who are able to engage with the complexities of teaching and learning, the changing contemporary world of their learners, and the world beyond the profession and its



institutions, in order to enhance the learning experiences for all learners in line with the GTCS Standards for Career Long Professional Learning.