St. Joseph's Academy

Curriculum Consultation

December 2018

This document outlines proposed changes to our S3 curriculum structure. All stakeholders (staff, parents, pupils and partners) can contribute to our consultation via a form located on the homepage of our school website.

Why do we need to consider our curricular offering in S3?

Our current model presents the following challenges:

- Complete absence of a range of subjects, including but not limited to: Drama, Computing, Business Management, Administration and Hospitality
  - By extension, these subjects are then inaccessible in S4 – S6
- Incompatible with Scottish Government guidance on breadth of delivery between nursery and the end of S3
  - Obligation to deliver content in all eight curricular areas between nursery and S3 cannot be guaranteed at the moment
- Recent examination results suggest that for the lowest attaining 20% of learners, our current model offers a combination of subjects that proves to be too challenging for some
  - Against national measures, the lowest attaining 20% of our young people in S4 exit S4 with some of lowest award returns in Scotland (there are other factors in addition to curricular pathway issues, but pathways are part of the wider difficulties that these young people encounter)
- Lack of flexibility to provide bespoke pathways for some young people
  - Evidenced by high leaving rates at the end of S4 and S5 whereby pupils see no viable combination of subjects to study
- Inflated class contact time in some subject areas when compared to local and national trends
- Labour Market Intelligence suggests that our current provision does not prepare young people well for areas of potential employment in Ayrshire

It should be noted that many of the issues outlined above were not unexpected during a transition from a two-year Higher model to a model that affords young people the chance to be presented for seven subjects in S4. This is the final step in realigning our provision against a vision that will better meet the needs of all learners.

Broad General Education

Scottish Government guidance states that young people have an entitlement to access third level delivery across all eight curricular areas until the end of S3. The curricular areas are as follows, with subjects often offered in schools shown under each heading:

Expressive Arts	Social Studies	Sciences	Mathematics
Art Drama Music	Geography History Modern Studies	Biology Chemistry Health Sector Physics	Maths
Languages	**Technologies**	**Religious and Moral Education**	**Health and Wellbeing**
English French Spanish	Accounts Administration and IT Business Computing Science Design and Manufacture Graphic Communication Practical Woodwork	RERC	PE PSE Home Economics

In addition, there is a national move towards flexible progression routes for some young people, with a range of alternative S3 courses on offer in many schools in Scotland. Examples include, but are not limited to:

John Muir Award	Duke of Edinburgh Award
Apprenticeships	Philosophy
Creative Industries	College Partnerships (e.g. Childcare with Outdoor Learning which is on offer this year)
Enterprise	Targeted intervention (e.g. tutorials to help young people improve literacy and/or numeracy skills)
Dance	

Our Current Model

At the moment, pupils leaving S2 to move into S3 must study the following subjects:

English	5 periods
Maths	5 periods
Modern Languages	4 periods
RE	2 periods
PE	2 periods
PSE	1 period

The subjects listed above are compulsory and as a result of various legal obligations will remain so. However, the allocation of time in Maths, English and Modern Languages is greater than that in most schools in Scotland.

In addition to the content detailed above, pupils have a degree of choice in some curricular areas at the end of S2 and as follows.

Social Subjects		Sciences	
Pupils select two from three subjects and attend both twice per week		Pupils select two from three subjects and attend both twice per week	
Geography	2 periods if selected as one of two choices	Biology	2 periods if selected as one of two choices
History	2 periods if selected as one of two choices	Chemistry	2 periods if selected as one of two choices
Modern Studies	2 periods if selected as one of two choices	Physics	2 periods if selected as one of two choices
In total, 4 periods of Social Subjects per week		In total, 4 periods of Science per week	

We believe that selecting two of three subjects in each curricular area offers a good balance between meeting a young person's entitlement in a curricular area and preparing for the transition to S4 national qualifications. We do not propose any change to the arrangements in Social Subjects or Science.

In our final two columns, we currently offer a mixture of some Expressive Arts, some Health and Wellbeing, some Technologies and some alternative pathway courses.

Choice Column 1	Choice Column 2
Three periods per week	Subjects offered on rotation with changes at various points in the academic year. Three periods per week.
Art Design and Manufacture Graphic Communication Music PE (in addition to compulsory PE)	Art John Muir Award Philosophy Music Technology Dance Practical Woodwork

These columns present an issue in so far as a young person can currently completely bypass Expressive Arts and/or Technologies while in S3. For example, a young person may elect to take PE in the first column and then a combination of John Muir, Philosophy and Woodwork in the final column. We are then unable to meet a young person's entitlement to study Expressive Arts.

Similarly, if a young person were to select Art in the first column and then a combination of John Muir, Music Technology and Dance in the second column, we would be unable to meet their entitlement to study a Technology.

A combination of PE in the first column, with John Muir, Philosophy and Dance would fail to meet the need to offer provision in both Expressive Arts and Technologies.

There is a clear absence of any provision in relation to Computing Science, Administration, Business Management, Drama and Hospitality. All five subject areas offer viable progression pathways in most schools.

There are issues in the second column, as rotations are used throughout the year. This means that those young people currently studying Music Technology, Art or Practical Woodwork in this column may not benefit from enough class contact time to maximise their chances of attaining well when progressing to S4.

Breadth and progression

The consequence of continuing with our current model is that we will offer young people fairly narrow progression routes from the BGE into S4. In S4, our pupils **often** take the following combination of subjects (excluding RE, PE and PSE):

Maths	English	1 Science	1 Social Subject	1 Modern Language	**Two of the following:**
					Additional Science
					Additional Social Subject
					Art
					Music
					PE (SQA rather than compulsory)
					Design and Manufacture
					Practical Woodwork

As an example, and to highlight where we have an issue, please consider a young person who does not have good fine motor skills. In the final column, they could find it difficult to access PE, Music, Art, Design and Manufacture and Practical Woodwork. In addition, many young people find that a combination of two science subjects with Maths, English and a Modern Language is a challenging undertaking in S4.
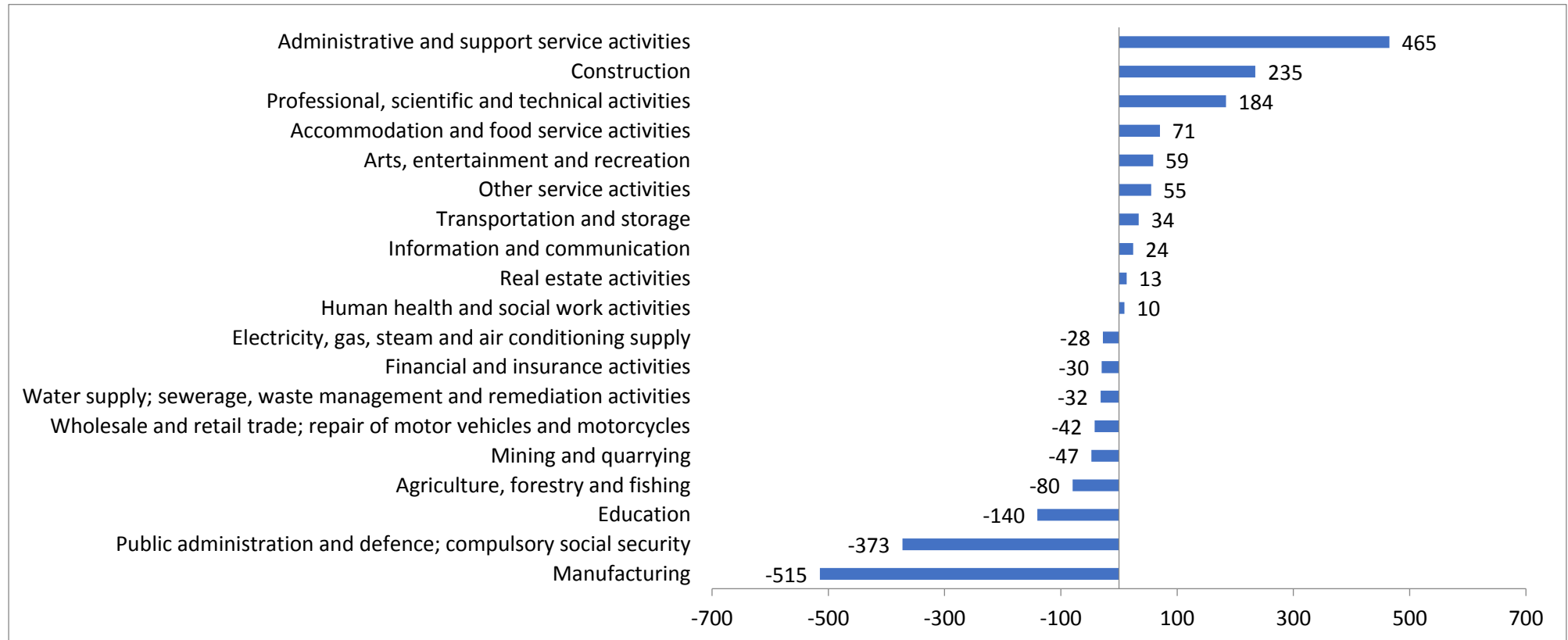
It is my view that our current model severely restricts viable pathways for those young people most in need of varied provision. I believe that the pathways on offer are intimidating to a number of our young people, and I am of the view that our high leaver rate in S4, and ongoing general attendance issues can be addressed somewhat by offering more variety in S3 in preparation for S4.

Labour Market Intelligence

Skills Development Scotland publish labour market projections and encourage schools and colleges to consider employment opportunities in the local area when devising curricular structures.

Labour Market Intelligence – Forecast for employment opportunities in Ayrshire 2016-2027

Changes in levels of jobs in Ayrshire

Sector	Change
Administrative and support service activities	465
Construction	235
Professional, scientific and technical activities	184
Accommodation and food service activities	71
Arts, entertainment and recreation	59
Other service activities	55
Transportation and storage	34
Information and communication	24
Real estate activities	13
Human health and social work activities	10
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	-28
Financial and insurance activities	-30
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	-32
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	-42
Mining and quarrying	-47
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	-80
Education	-140
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	-373
Manufacturing	-515

The absence of Administration, Business, Computing, Drama and Hospitality from our current curriculum offering sits in direct contrast to many of the predicted growth areas in Ayrshire during the time period most relevant to our pupils.

Proposal

With this in mind, we are proposing the following alterations to our S3 provision.

- Reduction in periods allocated to Maths, from five per week to four, in line with national trends
- Reduction in periods allocated to English, from five per week to four, in line with national trends
- Reduction in periods allocated to Modern Languages, from four per week to three in line with national trends
- Introduction of two specific columns, where young people elect two subjects to be studied twice per week for the entire year
  - The first column would offer a combination of Expressive Arts and Health and Wellbeing
  - The second column would offer Technologies
- If these changes are approved, there is scope to reintroduce Drama, Business, Administration, Computing and Hospitality in the Senior Phase
  - Not necessarily immediately, as we would need to recruit staff and perhaps realign staffing elsewhere in the school
- A single flexible period which would allow for an additional period of Modern Languages (should a young person wish to prepare to take French and Spanish in S4) or John Muir, Duke of Edinburgh, College provision, Philosophy etc.

Reduced allocations in Maths, English and Modern Languages

In five of the seven schools in East Ayrshire, Maths and English is offered four times per week in S3. Offering four periods per week is in keeping with provision in the vast majority of schools across Scotland and better reflects the reality faced by our young people when progressing into S4 (as Maths and English are offered four times per week in S4).

In Modern Languages, it is highly unusual to encounter an S3 structure which stipulates that all young people must study Modern Languages four times per week. The overwhelming majority of schools offer three compulsory periods of Modern Languages, with additional mechanisms by which a fourth period can be accessed to allow for bi-lingual provision. Our new proposed model would offer those wishing to study more than one language the chance to do so across four periods, but only three would be compulsory for all learners.

Our proposed S3 model:

Compulsory for all learners						Degree of choice while providing viable pathways to the Senior Phase and life after school				
Maths (x4)	English (x4)	Modern Languages (x3)	PE (x2)	RE (x2)	PSE (x1)	Science 2 subjects (x2 each)	Social Subjects 2 subjects (x2 each)	Arts and Wellbeing 2 subjects (x2 each)	Technologies 2 subjects (x2 each)	Flexible Provision (not an exhaustive list)
		French OR Spanish Scope for both if selecting additional period of Modern Languages in final column				Two from: Biology Chemistry Health Sector Physics	Two from: History Geography Modern Studies	Two from: Art Music PE (in addition to core PE) Scope to reintroduce Drama and Hospitality in this column	Two from: Computing* Design and Manufacture Graphic Communication Music Technology Practical Woodwork Scope to reintroduce Business and Administration in this column Likelihood that in the short term, this column would be supplemented with College provision or flexible courses due to staffing restrictions	One period of: Additional language for those wishing to study both French and Spanish John Muir Duke of Edinburgh College Input Philosophy Targeted tutorials in Numeracy and Literacy

* We currently have a Computing probationer, with scope to recruit in Computing as a potential priority for next session. We would need to consider recruiting in Drama, Hospitality and Business to extend the breadth on offer in future years.

Considerations

Staffing

Our current staffing model reflects our curriculum provision. We cannot offer Drama, Administration, Business, Computing or Hospitality next session unless we recruit staff to deliver those subjects.

We would need to consider our staffing allocation in order to deliver the breadth necessary to offer more pathways for our young people. In the short term, it would be our intention to try to reintroduce some subjects next session, most likely Computing (given positive feedback from S1-S3 pupils) and Drama. Recruitment in Business and Hospitality would remain a priority in the medium term, as we do have part time staff with scope to introduce rotations in S1 and S2 that could allow for some delivery in S3 next session.

For staff teaching Expressive Arts, Wellbeing and Technologies, the proposed model effectively guarantees uptake in S3, as selecting two subjects from those on offer will result in uptake across the entire column. It is likely that staff in these subject areas will see stability or an increase in S3 numbers when compared to the current model. Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing and Technologies would enjoy parity with provision in Social Subjects and Sciences. Such parity does not exist in the current model.

Staff in English, Maths, Modern Languages, RE, Science, Social Subjects and PSE will see no tangible difference between the current model and the proposed model as it relates to their subject areas (i.e., nothing changes in terms of the number of options pupils will be making in those columns).

Timetabling

Timetabling is an art form in the sense that you can create around 85 viable timetable structures for a school of our size. However, only a very small number of the viable models offer best value in terms of utilising our staffing allocation to deliver breadth in S3 and breadth of choice in S4. Moving to a structure where most subject contact time is divisible by two (e.g. four Maths, four English, two of most subjects elsewhere), introduces a great degree of flexibility when creating our schematic.

It would also allow us to run 'shadow columns' whereby we could, in consultation with parents/carers, decide that offering two periods per week of college courses, or two periods per week of targeted intervention is a better offer for some of our young people. For example, if a young person is likely to go on to study only one Science in S4, we could suggest that they take one Science twice per week in S3, with the other two periods allocated to college provision that better meets their needs. I would like to add that while this provision would be a welcome addition to our timetable schematic, it would only be offered where staffing could support such provision and it was in the best educational interests of the young person.

NB – Science is used as an example, the same principle can be applied across the Social Subjects, Arts and Wellbeing and Technologies columns.

Flexibility to best meet learners needs

Adopting a model whereby young people select two subjects from three or more options in all options columns will also allow us to manipulate options to best suit all learners. By this, I mean that in some cases, a young person may have little or no intention of progressing into S4 in a curricular area or may have one subject that they definitely require in S3/S4 rather than two (from any given options column).

Take Music as an example. At the moment, our provision in S3 can accommodate forty learners in Music in the same column. As soon as we reach forty-one pupils, we have an issue, as we cannot allocate three classes to Music at the same time. The new model would allow for two different work arounds as follows:

- We could offer two sections of Music twice per week at the same time, with a third at a different time of the week (by default the class sizes could then be smaller)
- We could discuss options with each young person and may determine that a specific learner has selected Art and Music, where Art is their priority. If this young person has no intention of taking Music in S4, but also enjoys PE, we could, in agreement with parents/carers manipulate their second choice so that it becomes PE and frees a space for a young person with a need to study Music

This principle can be applied across the Science, Social Subjects, Arts and Wellbeing and Technologies columns to ensure that young people are placed in subjects on a priority basis and in line with their intended progression pathways.

At the moment, we already utilise this technique in Science and Social Subjects but could extend this flexibility across Arts and Wellbeing and Technologies. It is then much more likely that young people can be placed in their priority courses for the duration of S3.

What of the middle 60% and top 20% in terms of attainment?

Our proposed new model would not restrict subject uptake options in S4, with viable traditional pathways towards medicine, law, engineering, dentistry etc. still on offer and unaffected by the proposed changes. However, it would significantly increase the options open to those pupils not interested in pursuing traditional academic pathways.

I would like to stress that many of the issues addressed in this section apply regardless of S3 structure but wish to share this information with you by way of clarification.

Why not three subjects from one curricular area?

This issue is often raised in relation to Science and increasingly in some other subject areas. There are four reasons for not offering three subjects in the same curricular area:

- Progression to university, college or employment will never stipulate a requirement for three subjects from the same curricular area e.g. Nearly all courses in medicine, engineering, dentistry etc. require Chemistry and then one of Biology and Physics depending upon the specialism
- Young people change their mind during their time at school, and locking themselves into one curricular area can restrict viable pathways at the point when they leave school, by which point they may realise that they have sacrificed appropriate depth for no gain
- Those young people with a strong desire to study three subjects from one column can crash the third subject in S6 provided that they have demonstrated competence in the other subjects in S5
- Staffing, as we cannot staff huge numbers in practical subjects where class sizes are restricted

It is standard practice in all but the very largest schools in Scotland to stipulate that three subjects from one curricular area is not viable or in a young person's best interests as early as S3 or S4.

Progression to S4, S5 and S6

Progression will be addressed in greater detail during options information evenings in January. Our proposed model would progress to a 'free choice' in S4, whereby Maths and English remain compulsory, but we will attempt to support as many combinations across the other five subjects as we can. In schools of our size, a 95% success rates in terms of offering all five desired options is what we would aim for. In a small number of cases, a young person may not be able to access one of their desired subjects in S4. This is not dependent on our S3 model and is already an annual challenge when timetabling.

By way of clarification, the S4 models that best meet learner needs in schools of our size often operate within the following parameters:

- Needs supersede wants, in so far as we have a duty of care to advise that young people prioritise what they need over what they want
    - For example, no university course will stipulate a combination of Higher Computing and Higher PE as entry requirements, therefore we cannot always guarantee that this or similar combinations with no specific progression route beyond school can be facilitated within school
    - Where a young person has identified the five subjects that they wish to progress to in S5, we will prioritise access to these five subjects in S4 (perhaps at the expense of one of their other two subject choices if this impacts on the needs of others)
    - Where we know that combinations are necessary for specific courses beyond school e.g. Higher Physics and Higher Chemistry for some engineering courses, we have a duty of care to do all we can to ensure that a young person can access both subjects in S4 and S5

- o Please be assured that we will always try to deliver what a young person wants to study but can only do so within our staffing allocation and never at the expense of delivering what is needed to ensure progression to employment, college or university
- o Where we have one place left on a course, and one young person needs the subject to secure employment, a college place or a university place and another pupil has no educational need but likes the subject, we will always prioritise the young person who needs the qualification over the young person with a personal interest but no progression need

- N4, N5 and Higher provision is allocated first before Advanced Highers are considered
  - o We must ensure that by the end of S5, the chance of a young person securing a positive destination is maximised
  - o For this reason, S6 Advanced Highers will only be timetabled where we have capacity after timetabling S1-S5
    - ▪ This is an issue in all schools of our size, where restrictions around staffing and class contact time often prevent us from offering a wide range of Advanced Highers despite our desire to do so

- Schematics are not fixed, and respond to the combined needs of S4-S6 pupils
  - o Meaning that provision/timetable structure is likely to alter in S4-S6 from year to year depending upon the pupil cohort and what best meets their needs
  - o To an extent, a lack of breadth in S3 is currently locking us into an S4-S6 structure that is fairly static, and cannot respond to different needs from cohort to cohort

What happens next?

This consultation is open until Monday 17th December. Please access the homepage of our website to complete an online form where your views can be captured.

No young person will be in a position whereby they cannot select the seven subjects they are planning to take in S4 as part of our proposed S3 schematic. At the moment, our current S3 schematic does prevent some young people from accessing all seven intended progression subjects as part of their S3 provision.

I understand that you may have views that are not aligned with my own, particularly when viewing some of the proposal in isolation. I ask that you consider the totality of this proposal as part of your return and look forward to reading your input.