

# Education Scotland Curriculum for Excellence

A Statement for Practitioners from  
HM Chief Inspector of Education

August 2016

# Re-focusing Curriculum for Excellence

*This definitive statement is for teachers and practitioners, including those in early learning and childcare, youth work, colleges and local authorities. It will be important for teachers, practitioners, leaders and local authority staff to consider how it applies in the context of their own stage, phase, sector and local authority.*

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is transforming learning experiences for children and young people across Scotland. The range of learning opportunities and the breadth of children's and young people's achievements is greater than ever before. In recent years there has been a great deal of very positive improvement work in early learning and childcare, schools and colleges on which we can continue to build. Moving forward, the two key priorities for CfE are:

- ensuring the best possible progression in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing for every child and young person; and
- closing the attainment gap.

To deliver this focus, a number of challenges remain. There is currently too much support material and guidance for practitioners. This is contributing to the growth of over-bureaucratic approaches to planning and assessment in many schools and classrooms across the country. Despite the recognition of these issues in the Tackling Bureaucracy report, progress has been far too slow. As a result we are taking action to significantly streamline all our support and guidance materials for the curriculum. This statement and the benchmarks to be published this session are key to this streamlined approach.

This statement is intended to provide clear, practical advice for teachers and practitioners on planning learning, teaching and assessment. It provides key messages about what teachers and practitioners are expected to do to effectively plan learning, teaching and assessment for all learners, and also suggests what should be avoided. Teachers should be empowered to use the flexibility that CfE provides to organise learning for children and young people in ways that best meets learners' needs. Schools should be working in a collegiate way to make key decisions.

The appendix to this statement summarises the key components of the curriculum framework within which teachers and practitioners are now expected to teach. Moving forward, the two key resources which teachers should use to plan learning, teaching and assessment are:

- **Experiences and Outcomes**
- **Benchmarks**

# PLANNING LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT USING THE EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES

## KEY MESSAGES – WHAT TO DO

- Use long-term plans to outline the structure of the year and the ways in which learning is organised throughout the whole year.
- Keep medium-term planning short and focused on the main learning activities developed from the Experiences and Outcomes (Es and Os). Group Es and Os together in ways which best suit learners.
- Short-term planning on a daily or weekly basis should be flexible and be regarded as working notes to help organise learning.
- Take a collegiate approach to moderation of planning learning, teaching and assessment.
- Work together with colleagues to review and reduce any unnecessary bureaucracy. Plan and organise learning in a way which avoids each week at school feeling too cluttered to provide space and time for depth of learning.
- Planning should include consideration of how best the needs of individual and groups of children and young people will be met.
- Prioritise literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the curriculum to ensure that all learners make the best possible progress.
- Plan interdisciplinary learning (IDL) to make natural links across learning. Be aware of what is happening in other subjects and make connections.
- All planning must focus directly on enhancing the learner journey. When asked to complete paperwork which does not directly relate to improving the learner journey, challenge this with your colleagues.

## KEY MESSAGES – WHAT TO AVOID

- Avoid writing overly-detailed plans for the year ahead which limit your flexibility to respond to children's and young people's needs, interests and progression.
- Do not plan for individual Es and Os or spend excessive time writing detailed descriptions of learning activities.
- Do not 'tick off' all of the Es and Os separately.
- Do not spend excessive time completing detailed daily or weekly planning templates or writing detailed evaluations of plans.
- Avoid unnecessary bureaucracy creeping back in over time.
- Stop doing too many things at the same time. For example, in a primary school, covering all eight curriculum areas every week.
- Do not lose a clear focus on helping all children and young people to progress at an appropriate pace and achieve the highest standards in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Do not spend time on IDL which does not provide opportunities to apply and deepen learning or is contrived.

# PLANNING LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT USING THE BENCHMARKS

The purpose of the Benchmarks is to set out very clear statements about what children and young people need to learn to achieve each level of the curriculum. Benchmarks streamline and embed a wide range of existing assessment guidance (significant aspects of learning, progression frameworks and annotated exemplification) into one key resource to support teachers' professional judgement.

## KEY MESSAGES – WHAT TO DO

- Periodically (from time to time) use assessments to sample and pull together learning in a joined-up way.
- Plan an appropriate balance between on-going and periodic assessment – this will vary from stage to stage.
- Moderate assessment judgements by taking account of a sample of evidence from different sources to discuss standards and the progress of learners.
- As a school, develop simple and effective approaches to monitoring and tracking learners' progress particularly in literacy and numeracy. Tracking needs to be as easy to use as possible.
- Regularly discuss tracking information with colleagues to plan additional support and interventions to help improve learners' progress.
- Evaluate learners' progress on an on-going basis and keep short concise notes to help planning for next steps in learning. This will include identifying where additional support and challenge may be needed.
- Use the benchmarks to help monitor progress and support overall professional judgement of when a learner has achieved a curriculum level.
- Involve children and young people in leading their own learning and involve them in profiling their achievements.
- Reporting to parents should highlight latest progress, identify next steps in learning and build on profiling. Discussions should highlight ways in which parents can support their child's progress.

## KEY MESSAGES – WHAT TO AVOID

- Avoid spending time on assessment activities which do not help to identify children's and young people's next steps in learning.
- Do not over-assess learners or assess the same content repeatedly in different ways. Do not create large portfolios of evidence.
- Avoid duplication and keeping evidence of every detail within the Benchmark.
- Avoid waiting until learners have demonstrated evidence of every aspect of learning within the Benchmarks before moving on to the next level.
- Avoid undue pressure on learners with too many assessments in different subjects at once.
- Avoid spending too much time collecting a wide range of evidence for moderation purposes.
- Do not track and record progress against individual Es and Os.
- Do not track progress and achievement using the terms 'developing, consolidating, secure'.
- Do not spend time writing long reports for parents which describe lots of classwork or use professional jargon.

## APPENDIX:

### Summary of the Curriculum Framework in Scotland – August 2016

This summary is for teachers and practitioners, including those in early learning and childcare, youth work and colleges. It provides clarity of the main messages.

CORE INFORMATION	KEY MESSAGES
<p><b>Purpose (four capacities)</b></p> <p>The purpose of Curriculum for Excellence is to help children and young people to become:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Successful learners;</i></li><li>• <i>Confident individuals;</i></li><li>• <i>Responsible citizens; and</i></li><li>• <i>Effective contributors.</i></li></ul>	<p>Developing <b>the capabilities and attributes</b> of the four capacities is embedded across all learning.</p>
<p><b>Aim</b></p> <p>Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) aims to raise standards, to close the (poverty-related) attainment gap, and to prepare children and young people for their future.</p>	<p>Building on the messages of <b>Building the Curriculum 3</b>, the <b>National Improvement Framework</b>, <b>Scottish Attainment Challenge</b> and <b>Developing the Young Workforce</b> gives a greater focus to our aim.</p>
<p><b>Values</b></p> <p>The Scottish approach to the curriculum is values based. Wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity define the values for Scottish society.</p>	<p>Apply and reinforce these values at every opportunity to ensure children and young people develop understanding and respect for others and a sense of their personal and collective responsibility.</p>
<p><b>The curriculum framework</b></p> <p>The curriculum includes all that is planned for children and young people throughout their education. It includes <b>four contexts for learning</b>: curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, ethos and life of the school and opportunities for personal achievement.</p> <p>The <b>Experiences and Outcomes</b> (Es and Os) for each curriculum area illustrate the learning within each level.</p> <p>Curriculum for Excellence provides flexibility for schools and settings to plan learning suitable for their own context. The school community and partners should be involved in deciding how to use this flexibility.</p> <p>Children's rights and <b>entitlements</b> are at the heart of the Scottish Curriculum.</p>	<p>The curriculum framework, as laid out in the <b>Building the Curriculum</b> Series, remains the same.</p> <p>Teachers and practitioners provide a curriculum that is coherent and flexible, takes account of the local context and ensures appropriate progression and levels of attainment for all children and young people.</p> <p>The National Improvement Framework increases the focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and highlights the need to close the poverty-related attainment gap.</p> <p>The Developing the Young Workforce Programme increases the focus on recognising children's and young people's skills, the links between learning and positive destinations, and access to learning pathways that meets their needs and aspirations.</p>
<p><b>Moderation</b></p> <p>Moderation is the way in which practitioners arrive at a shared understanding of standards and expectations.</p> <p>Moderation takes place at local, regional and national levels, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• teachers and practitioners at the same curriculum level;</li><li>• across a school or setting;</li><li>• across a group of schools/settings;</li><li>• within local authorities;</li><li>• through regional groups; or</li><li>• via national groups.</li></ul>	<p>Moderation is integral to planning learning, teaching and assessment.</p> <p>The process of moderation is not an activity that happens only at the end of a block or year.</p> <p>Teachers and practitioners, with senior leaders, regularly consider a range of assessment evidence which demonstrates how well children and young people are making progress and achieving their potential.</p>

## CORE INFORMATION

## KEY MESSAGES

### Principles of curriculum design

These apply at all stages of learning with different emphases at different times.

- *challenge and enjoyment;*
- *breadth;*
- *progression;*
- *depth;*
- *personalisation and choice;*
- *coherence; and*
- *relevance.*

### Responsibility of all

- literacy;
- numeracy; and
- health and wellbeing.

There should be a continuous focus on these from the ages of 3 to 18.

Children and young people are entitled to two hours of quality physical education per week.

The principles are taken into account when planning learning for all children and young people.

Teachers and practitioners identify what will be taught and how to best meet the needs of all learners. This is underpinned by a clear, shared understanding of progression and high quality learning and teaching.

When planning learning, teaching and assessment Experiences and Outcomes are grouped or bundled together.

**Building the Ambition** provides guidance to those working in the early learning and childcare sector. It should be used in parallel with CfE guidance.

### Assessing progress and achievement

Assessment is integral to learning and teaching. It is an ongoing process.

#### Achievement of a level:

Achievement of a level is based on teachers' overall professional judgement, informed by evidence.

#### Benchmarks:

The Benchmarks are designed to support teacher professional judgement of both, progress towards, and achievement of, a level.

A range of assessment evidence is used to plan next steps in learning.

Assessment judgements should be based on the Benchmarks for each curriculum level.

The Benchmarks embed the significant aspects of learning and progression frameworks. They provide a single streamlined resource to supporting teachers' professional judgement.

This document can be downloaded at: <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/CfE-delivery-plan.aspx>

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