



Notre Dame High School

Curriculum Rationale

Session 2014/'15



“The curriculum must be designed, managed and delivered to take full account of each learner’s individual needs and stage of development. This does not mean that there is an individualised approach to curriculum planning. Designing the curriculum requires planning in partnership with young people, their parents and carers...” BTC3

Context

With a new Head Teacher in place for session 2014/’15, it was an appropriate time for Notre Dame High School and its partners to begin to review our curriculum in a more formal way. Curriculum for Excellence had been implemented four years previously and with changes now being seen in the SQA National Qualifications, staff were beginning to look back at their programmes and courses within Broad General Education to ensure articulation.

The first stage in this process of review was to look again at our Curriculum Rationale with all our partners, ensuring that any changes we made to our curriculum reflected the vision, values and aims of our school whilst better meeting the needs of our young people and community.

Self-Evaluation

The Senior Leadership Team led this review with senior promoted staff within the Extended Leadership Team, using key Education Scotland documents to support our self-evaluation process. These included;

- Building the Curriculum series
- How Good Is Our School 3?
- HMIE Inspection Advice Note 2014/’15
- Evaluating and Improving Our Curriculum, S1-S3
- Curriculum for Excellence Implementation Plan 2014/’15.

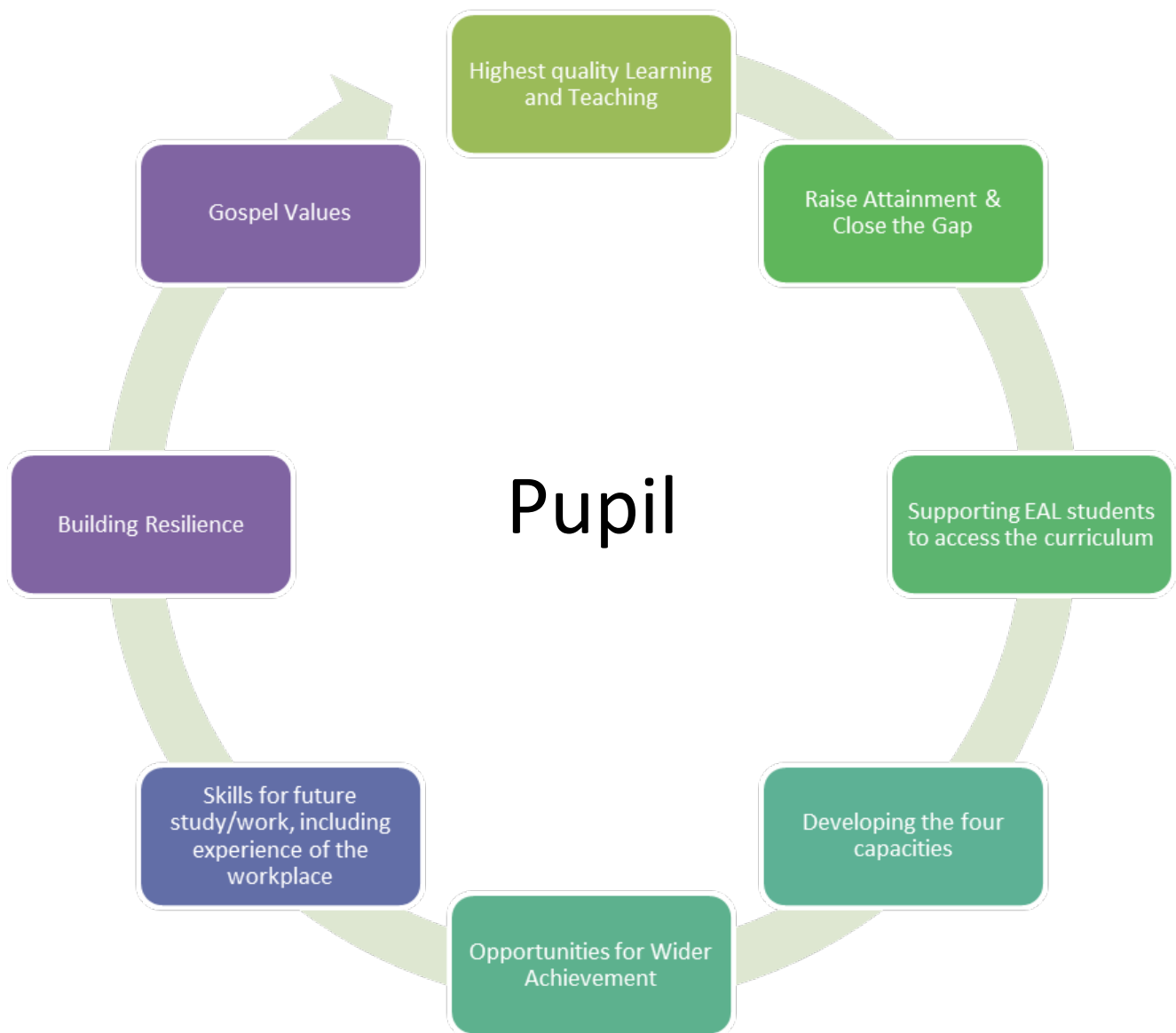
The result of this work allowed all staff to participate in discussions around the main drivers for our school and our curriculum during Inset and collegiate working time. We then met with our Pupil Council and worked with parents and carers during Parent Information Evenings.

In keeping with advice from Building the Curriculum 3, all parties recognised that Notre Dame High School is unique in many ways and indeed the profile of our school has changed significantly over the past few years. Critical to all discussions was the importance of maintaining the tradition of our school in maintaining high expectations of all – staff, pupils and partners.

Curriculum Rationale

“.....every young person will attain the knowledge, skills, qualifications and dispositions required for a personally rewarding life, productive employment and effective contribution to the wider community.” ND Vision, Values, Aims

Our Vision, Values and Aims statement is central to our curriculum rationale and was foremost in our minds as it was designed. The rationale itself can be summed up in the diagram below:



Our curriculum includes all experiences which are planned for young people in their learning environment. As well as the work undertaken traditionally in classrooms, it includes the ethos and life of the school, interdisciplinary learning and opportunities for personal achievement.

Gospel Values

As a Catholic school, everything that we do is founded in Gospel values; the quality of relationships between staff and pupils is due to a focus on nurturing a climate of respect, love, compassion and forgiveness. Staff are committed to our pupils and their futures and they recognise the privileged role they have in the formation of young adults and citizens of Glasgow.

One of the characteristics within the Charter for Catholic Schools is the promotion of respect for different beliefs and cultures and for inter-faith dialogue. Our school community recognises the diverse nature of our school and celebrates the opportunity this provides to develop understanding, tolerance and respect.

Highest Quality Learning and Teaching

For young people to achieve their potential, the activities within the classroom are undoubtedly the most important factor in determining their success. Staff in Notre Dame are committed to ensuring that these standards are maintained as reflected in our school Vision, Values and Aims and in our annual School Improvement Plan.

Literacy, numeracy, health and well-being are highlighted as key skills which will allow our young people to gain access to learning and to succeed in life. Every member of staff has a responsibility to develop pupil skills in these areas and to provide direction which will allow them to make connections across subject areas.

Our current Learning and Teaching policy was written in 2011 and we will continue to review this work as curriculum for excellence becomes further embedded.

Raising Attainment and Closing the Gap

A national and local authority priority, Notre Dame High School has always been committed to ensuring our young people achieve their fullest potential. This is reflected in our SQA results and positive destination figures.

Using the Insight tool for self-evaluation, we are able to understand the areas of strength and further development – the highest performing subjects as well as the young people who are underachieving by SIMD band.

Staff at all levels utilise a range of strategies to help raise attainment. Supported Study, tracking and monitoring of progress data, feedback on coursework, Study Weekends, partnership with parents; these are just some of the ways we continue to support and challenge.

Supporting Learners with English as an Additional Language

As a secondary school with only two associated primaries, Notre Dame High School accepts a large number of pupils on placing request from around 50 primary schools from across Glasgow and beyond. This means that the community we serve is not local, but city-wide. Parents choose our school for a variety of reasons – catholic, single-sex nature, high levels of attainment, excellent positive destination figures, and school ethos.

Over the past few years our school profile has changed with around 50% of our young people experiencing English as a second language. We are committed to ensuring that our curriculum provides the support required for these young people to flourish. This includes;

- provision of appropriate courses and programmes
- in-class support
- individual and group tuition
- differentiated materials
- enhanced personal support
- additional assessment arrangements.

Developing the Four Capacities

We are committed to ensuring that each young person experiences a curriculum which reflects the purpose of Curriculum for Excellence; equipping our young people with the skills and capabilities to be **successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors**.

Within Broad General Education from S1 – S3 these are fulfilled through the experiences and outcomes in each curricular area, however, during Senior Phase and out with the classroom, young people will continue to be exposed to the four capacities through schools ethos, wider achievement opportunities and inter-disciplinary learning.

Opportunities for Wider Achievement

As one of our key curriculum characteristics, opportunities for Wider Achievement are a critical component of the Notre Dame pupil experience, i.e. staff at all levels recognise these activities as just as important as traditional learning within the classroom. They also provide great opportunities to further develop the four capacities through the Broad General Education and in the Senior Phase.

Our commitment to continuous improvement in this important aspect of the pupil experience is demonstrated by the design of a promoted post remit. Mrs Pauline Kelly, Principal Teacher of Pastoral Care, assumes responsibility for the strategic direction of this curricular characteristic.

Our staff are committed to providing appropriate, high quality opportunities for pupils at all stages of their secondary education. In recent years we have been successful in formally recognising wider achievement for pupils in S4 through a timetabled period each week. Volunteer staff have used their own expertise and interests to enhance the accreditation of this group. Within Broad General Education, all year groups have been experiencing a double period of Masterclass, a skills-based programme which includes personalisation and choice of activity. These short courses are designed to provide challenge, independent learning and enjoyment.

As well as the opportunities which exist within the curriculum, there are a large number of extra-curricular activities which provide young people with a sense of achievement, e.g. membership of a Youth Team or attendance at the Glasgow University Maths Masterclass.

Skills for Future Study/Work

With the publication of the Wood Commission's report on "Developing Scotland's Young Workforce", there is an enhanced focus on schools to better prepare young people for the future.

Notre Dame High School has a very positive track record in achieving positive and sustained destinations for our leavers. This comes as a result of knowing our young people well, anticipating those in danger of not being in education or employment and the use of highly effective teamwork between school staff and partner agencies in providing support where required.

Our school team consists of;

- Pupil Support Team
- Principal Teacher of Employability and Enterprise
- Education Liaison Officer
- Skills Development Scotland Career Advisor
- Opportunities for All working group.

We are committed to ensuring that our pupils leave school with an appropriate offer of study, employment or training which is best suited to their strengths and achievements.

Building Resilience

Through our work with Psychological Services, it is clear that Notre Dame High School already provides a very nurturing environment. This is a result of the staff team, including Pupil Support Assistants, office and janitorial staff, having a caring and supportive approach to our young people.

The Pupil Support Team are highly experienced in providing advice and support to our pupils in curricular, social, personal and vocational matters. However, there are times when we

engage with a number of partner agencies in providing specialist support for a range of wellbeing needs. As we undertake our role in Getting It Right for Every Child, we are increasingly aware of the need for positive mental health in helping meet each of the eight wellbeing indicators. We believe that by supporting our young people to be more resilient, they will be better equipped with the skills, confidence and capabilities to succeed.

This will take a committed effort by all staff to implement a shared approach to providing an appropriate level of support and challenge for our pupils.