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Education and Families

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Dear parent/carer,

I am writing to you to explain that the Education and Families service at North Lanarkshire Council has recently been working on plans to introduce a new structure to the school week for all secondary schools from August 2021 following agreement at committee.

As teachers and education staff continue to focus their efforts on the recovery period of the Covid-19 pandemic and the return for schools, the education and attainment of our children and young people firmly remains our focus, as well as shaping the redesign of our services for the future.

At this point in time, preparing young people for the future has never been more important. Therefore the plans outlined here are designed to release the potential of young people and commit to greater opportunities for them to explore issues of environmental and social justice, as well as to devote themselves to the kinds of creative and critical thinking that will be required of them in life beyond school. The ideas we describe here have been informed by discussion with stakeholder groups of young people themselves.

Changes to the secondary school timetable

The reconfiguration of the secondary school week means that all secondary schools will move from the current 33-period week to a 32-period week and this will begin when schools return for the start of the new school term in August. These changes represent a different weekly timetable for young people with a shorter finish to one of the days, which is currently being proposed as Friday. The week will now comprise four days of seven periods and one day of four.

Please be assured that there will not be any reduction in taught key curriculum academic subjects. Indeed, our young people will now have the opportunity to participate in exciting and indispensable experiences at a voluntary afternoon session on the day school finishes early (four-period day), for all year groups S1-S6. In addition, schools may also take the opportunity to introduce daily registration slots for pupils, due to a relaxation of our previous policy on this. It will be up to individual schools to decide on this, as per the national requirement of local authorities to empower schools and teachers.

The new timetable will deliver the core curriculum over 32 periods and will include a voluntary afternoon of citizenship, enterprise and development (CED) activities, which are focused on learning for the future.

All young people attending the afternoon session on the Friday will in the main, finish by 3pm although this may be later depending on which activity children and young people are involved with. Each school will advise parents/carers as appropriate and more details will be made available towards the end of the summer term.

Citizenship, Enterprise and Development Programme

The voluntary CED afternoon will include an enhanced health and wellbeing offer for young people and will be an opportunity to gain valuable, character-building experience. Crucially, S1-3 young people will benefit from the chance to experience fun-packed sport, music and creative arts experiences they may have missed out on due to the restrictions imposed to help reduce the spread of Covid-19 over the past 11 months. While there will also be opportunities for senior phase pupils to further develop life and employability skills to prepare them for further education, training or a job beyond school.

This fresh programme of CED activities will cover areas including employability, music, sport and arts, health and wellbeing, digital learning, outdoor education, academic and leadership development. This will assist in equipping our young people with skills they will require for life and work. It will include a range of experiences delivered in-house through services such as Active Schools, Music Service, Enterprise and Employability, Community Learning and Development, as well as a wide range of partners including New College Lanarkshire. Skills Development Scotland, NHS Lanarkshire, Police Scotland and Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire.

Undoubtedly, the weekly CED sessions will provide an afternoon for personal development and achievement with valuable, structured offers for different year stages.

At the heart of the proposals is our absolute commitment to supporting young people so they can reach their full potential. By adopting a more flexible timetable we want to raise attainment and provide young people with the skills they need for learning, life and work.

It is vital that children and young people are given the opportunity to access experiences that will enhance and develop them personally and given them the skills they need to achieve their aspirations for when they leave school.

The CED programme of activities will fit around four key themes:

Attainment – supported study, additional curricular subjects (including music)

Health and wellbeing – sporting excellence, mental health & wellbeing, outdoor learning.

The world of work – Developing the young workforce, skills for learning, life and work, career information advice and guidance and vocational opportunities leading to positive and sustained destinations.

Citizenship and our community – Youth Parliament, volunteering, community projects, leadership programmes.

The council including schools and a wide range of partners are committed to supporting this programme to ensure it best meets the needs of our children and young people.

A mailbox has been set up for all parents/carers to send their feedback or to ask questions and this can be accessed by emailing: 32periodweek@northlan.gov.uk.

As the detail of the CED programme is developed, more detail and information will be provided.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Brown

**Executive Director
Education and Families**