

Interim Shared Head Teacher of Holy Cross and St Patrick's Primary Discussion Monday 14th March at 18:00 via Teams

Attendance:

Holy Cross Primary

Anne Jackson (Chair), Catherine Green (Secretary), Nadine Killiard, Lorna Lalley

St Patrick's Primary

Claire Walters (Chair), Elaine McLernon (Secretary), Jennifer Toft, Nicola Lawler

North Lanarkshire Council

Provost Jones, Cllr Heather Brannan-McVey, Gerard McLaughlin, Head of Education (North), Michelle O'Halloran, Education and Families Manager (North), Margaret Hunter, Education and Families Manager (North)

Also in Attendance:

Marie Murphy, HT Holy Cross Primary School and Acting HT St Patrick's Primary School

- 1.1 Anne Jackson chaired the meeting and it was minuted by Catherine Green as a record of events, Anne introduced the PC members from Holy Cross Primary.
 - 1.2 Anne explained that this meeting was being held in response to repeated requests from both Holy Cross PC (going back to December 2021) and St Patrick's PC (going back to 15th November 2021).
 - 1.3 Anne introduced Claire Walters, Chair of St Patrick's PC, Claire introduced the members from St Patrick's that were in attendance.
 - 1.4 Claire gave an introduction, stressed that the meeting was welcome and thanked NLC for setting it up. She identified three main points that made the meeting necessary:
 1. Lack of information updates and lack of updates to the parent forum regarding what has been happening since Mrs Rae notified NLC of her retirement in June 2021 and subsequently since the current interim arrangement was put in place on 18th October 2021.
 2. Lack of acknowledgement of the parental concerns, what the plans are and when they due to happen, no response to letters send highlighting concerns, not even acknowledgement of receipt.
 3. What is the plan, as time goes on the concerns are growing within the parent forum that there there are plans in place that we are not being made aware of.
 - 1.5 Claire stressed there is no question on Mrs Murphy's ability to do the role and it is acknowledged that she is doing a fantastic job under the circumstances.
 - 1.6 Claire handed the meeting back to Anne and suggested she may want to update everyone on what was happening elsewhere in North Lanarkshire. Anne said not at the moment as from her point of view none of that is relevant to this discussion but she may want to revisit that depending on how this meeting goes.
 - 1.7 Anne handed the meeting over to Gerard, Michelle and Margaret to provide answers to Claire's points.
 - 1.8 Gerard thanks for the invite and the team from North Lanarkshire introduced themselves.
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Interim Shared Head Teacher of Holy Cross and St Patrick's Primary Discussion
Monday 14th March at 18:00 via Teams

- 1.9 Gerard acknowledged the three points and asked to give a Powerpoint presentation to set the context and answer the three specific questions as he went through it. Gerard proceeded to give a Powerpoint presentation about NLC's plans for Multi Establishment Leadership Models (MELMs) in response to Claire's three questions. He also said that the Council has learned lessons regarding communication and that the development of this presentation was in response to that. He was willing to acknowledge and accept that the lack of communication had caused problems and felt the Powerpoint best expressed this and answer the questions to the group.
- 1.10 Powerpoint appended to the minute. The main points raised by Gerard McLaughlin were:
- a. Have taken on board feedback from Provost Jones and Cllr Heather Brannan-McVey regarding the lack of communication.
 - b. The presentation gives wider context, not necessarily specific to our schools.
 - c. Challenges in recruitment of head teachers – lack of applications for past 4/5 posts making them impossible to fill.
 - d. The Plan for North Lanarkshire and the hub model. That's in the plan for North Lanarkshire overall.
 - e. Meeting took place for Education & Families committee back in February 2019. Also a budget setting meeting, because it's never been denied that this includes a savings proposal.
 - f. Reports were shared with E&F committee on shared headships in May 2020 and June 2021.
 - g. Already have the Empowering Clusters model and have been piloting the MELM in some settings in primary, secondary and ASN.
 - h. One particular school that is sharing a lot of information, but stressed again that there is no grand master plan, but where opportunities present themselves to test the model then they are taken. Also been linking in with the diocese.
 - i. Gerard then explained how the clusters work and what a Multi-Establishment head is. Hope is will move towards multi-stage campuses (all-through schools). Not unique to North Lanarkshire, gave examples from Perth & Kinross and Argyll & Bute.
 - j. Gerard also referenced the Learning Together report produced by Education Scotland that explores the educational benefits of this model. *[A copy of this 2010 report is appended to these minutes]*.
 - k. The introduction or review of NLC leadership models has been approved at Council level, NLC has not yet identified any schools to be included in the new model.
 - l. The introduction of any model will be gradual. The mention of 23 MELMs came from the trade unions, who are nervous about the impact on HTs and raised the worrying concern that the plan was to implement this across the whole of North Lanarkshire. Answer to that is absolutely not. If the model is implemented, then it will be (in mainstream) a maximum of one per cluster. There is no grand masterplan across North Lanarkshire at the moment. If there is an opportunity to look at something on an interim basis to try it out and get feedback, then that will be taken.
 - m. Gerard referenced one of the Committee papers directly, which states that before anything is done, the five cases have to be met. That's where the model aligns with Council policy.

Interim Shared Head Teacher of Holy Cross and St Patrick's Primary Discussion Monday 14th March at 18:00 via Teams

And in response to the specific questions:

- n. The lack of information – Education & Families department does not want to cause any additional stress or strain, because there has been a lot of misinformation that has been circulated about what the Council is planning, but accept that communication to date has not been adequate.
 - o. Mrs Murphy has agreed to stay in place until June. As you know, we are going through a consultation period at the moment where NLC has spoken to pupils, staff and sent out a questionnaire. Then need to go out to wider groups and aiming to conclude the consultation in the particular setting in the North on 28th April. From there the decision will be made at a service level, not by the Education and Family Team what the outcome will be.
 - p. Last week Gerard spoke with Mrs Murphy and she gave a clear view of the role, the beginning of the year was very difficult with staffing levels which made it more difficult and this has to be taken on board.
 - q. Gerard confirmed there is no plan for Holy Cross and St Patrick's to be a MELM. If this was the plan we would go through the consultation period that is currently happening with another cluster. There has been a lot of information going around the Parent Councils from two particular Parent Council groups that has caused a lot of anxiety. Gerard confirmed that he has told Mrs Murphy that he will make sure once the decision has been made regarding the model and there have been further discussions from a Council level he will be able to provide a further update.
- 1.11 Gerard reaffirmed there is no grand master plan or piece of paper with Holy Cross and St Patrick's as a jointly managed school, he said that this is an honest response as a senior member of the council in the presence of Provost Jones and Cllr Heather Brannan-McVey.
- 1.12 Claire stated in hindsight it may have been useful for the attendees to have seen the slides prior to the meeting to prepare better.
- 1.13a Q. Claire noted that the piece of information that the interim has been extended to June is very significant, as we are hearing it for the very first time. When will this be communicated to the parent body.**
- 1.13b A. Gerard confirmed he will send the presentation to the attendees and is happy to meet again to answer further questions that arise. He also confirmed that he would put a communication out by the end of the week to the schools confirming the arrangement. Mrs Murphy asked for the attendees to keep this information as confidential until she has the chance to speak to the staff at both schools. This was agreed. Claire asked if this could be expedited.
- 1.14a Q. Claire also asked for clarification that the other interim arrangements in the schools (i.e. the acting depute heads) would continue during this time.**
- 1.14b A. Gerard confirmed that this would be discussed at Council level and communicated. Gerard also stated that there is another piece of work being done with the trade unions at present about "shared headships/Multi Establishment Head Teachers" and specifically around what the management models will look like. If this goes through with the trade unions he can share how the models would look.
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Interim Shared Head Teacher of Holy Cross and St Patrick's Primary Discussion Monday 14th March at 18:00 via Teams

Gerard stated again that although he will share this information in the spirit of being open and honest, we are currently getting way ahead of ourselves in terms of Holy Cross and St Patrick's. However in response to the question of why this happened and why here, an opportunity arose due to retirement to look at the situation. Also the fact of previous HT adverts having gone out sometimes 3 times with no one responding. Also acknowledge that there is also the opportunity of a cost saving, but again stress the educational benefits is a factor and these comments are not being made in relation to our specific schools, just the general benefits of MELMs.

Gerard also anticipated the question about timescales. Still going through the process of a consultation at the moment in another cluster and will need to wait for the outcome of that before an update can be provided on our case.

- 1.15a Q. Anne asked in terms of timescales, the St Patrick's job has never been advertised, if it is advertised now that is still close to June to have someone in place. Secondly she appreciates all the information on the MELM but these two schools don't fit the model agreed by the Council to our understanding, and is therefore not relevant to the meeting this evening. So in short, when will the job at St Patrick's be advertised.**
- 1.15b A. Gerard spoke about two schools in the central area at present that will be merged as one school in a new build but currently two schools on two campuses so looking at how that one works out (Carnbroe and Sikeside). *[Nadine added a comment to the chat that the rolls of Carnbroe and Sikeside are 266 and 79 respectively whilst according to the 2020 census the combined roll of Holy Cross and St Patrick's is 568, excluding early years]*. Gerard continued by highlighting that Covid is having significant impact on staff numbers and pupil absence so it is actually very difficult to get a clear picture on how the model will work. As for timescales a definitive decision cannot be given at present and we hope the answer to this after the Easter break to give a more definitive answer what NLC is going to do. Is it a decision on whether we're going to go to consultation on this, or is it a decision that we're going to move towards an appointment. And that's something that will need to be decided at a Council level, how we are going to proceed moving forward with this.
- 1.16a Q. Nadine: If there is no grand plan for a shared headship between Holy Cross and St Patrick's as she understands, you were aware of the Mrs Rae's intention to retire in October 2021 from last summer, so we are now 1 year down the line of when you were informed. Nadine stated she fully appreciates the job Mrs Murphy has done and has no issues with her ability and especially in Covid times, with the issues that brings with it one head teacher having to split herself between two schools in two different places is extremely difficult. Add to that there is also an issue with the amount of Deputy Heads that are in service as this role was removed a few years ago as this was also a cost saving exercise. Nadine is very concerned that we will now have to wait some more unnecessary weeks for an advert. If we are not on the radar for a MELM when a lot of these models are based on a joint campus and not on teachers travelling between distances and when it is a distance base model its usually because the schools are small, Holy Cross and St Patrick's are not small schools.**
- 1.16b A. Michelle had her hand up, so Anne invited her to respond. Michelle indicated that she was not addressing Nadine's question but wanted to offer reassurance that NLC would hope
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**Interim Shared Head Teacher of Holy Cross and St Patrick's Primary Discussion
Monday 14th March at 18:00 via Teams**

that the management structure below the shared headship would remain in place, so if Mrs Murphy is being asked to stay on she would hope Mr McKenna and Mr Higney would also keep their temporary roles. She took on board what Nadine was saying regarding the timeframe and said they will try and resolve it as soon as possible.

- 1.17a Q. Elaine: Would like to echo Nadine's question, she joined the Parent Council when her daughter was in Primary 1 which was when Mr Thomas left, the job was advertised in September and Mrs Rae was in post before the Christmas break. Elaine is also very concerned that a known situation is taking so long and at the lack of action. There is a responsibility to sort this out sooner rather than later to sort this out. Claire also asked: we have been given dates of June, the consultation and discussions really needs to take place before June, if this is extended again she thinks the backlash and heightened anxiety from parents will be extremely negative and unacceptable.**
- 1.17b A. Gerard confirmed for the record that this meeting is not being used as a consultation. The information on the MELM was general information sharing. With regards to the last 3 points raised he confirmed that can't provide a lot of information at this time but will be able to provide more information in 4 weeks' time, after the Easter break.
- 1.18a Q. Anne asked to confirm that in the week of the 18 April Gerard will come back to us and either tell us that the position will be advertised or there will be consultation for shared headship.**
- 1.18b A. Gerard said that he is not the person to make the decision but will come back at the time and provide the update.
- 1.19a Q. Anne: The information that she has seen about MELM is around the hub model and in all through schools, and specific cases involving small rural schools and/or ASN schools. Our schools don't fit in that model so where does that leave us.**
- 1.19b A. Gerard said that to be clear, a whole variety of different models are being tested.
- 1.20a Anne interjected to clarify that she understood some of the pilots were primary to primary, but they were very specific circumstances and about the only thing we had in common was that fact that it was two primary schools. She then referred to the information Nadine had put in the chat about the rolls of the respective schools and the size of Carnbroe/Sikeside compared to Holy Cross and St Patrick's.**
- 1.20b A. Gerard said that this was the exact point made by Provost Jones and Cllr Brannan-McVey when they spoke with the Education department. Accepted the point made but looking at all the information they have to make an informed decision about whether to progress to a consultation with us and will provide an update in the week beginning the 18th. This is when he will give an overview of what the Council's intention is moving forward.
- 1.21a Q. Anne: is there something else that has to happen beforehand – has this already been agreed within the Council or does further discussion have to take place on rolling out the model.**
- 1.21b A. Gerard said the decision has been made around the early planning and committee report about shared and executive heads and the 5 bullet points. From a national perspective there

Interim Shared Head Teacher of Holy Cross and St Patrick's Primary Discussion
Monday 14th March at 18:00 via Teams

is already a policy in place. From a local perspective officers have taken papers through committee and they have been approved in principle and then it has to be a policy on a local level about how this would be implemented. Gerard reiterated that there has been no decision regarding Holy Cross and St Patricks, the principle is about MELM and this policy was approved in principle.

1.22a Q. Cllr Heather Brannan-McVey said at the meeting her and Provost Jones had Derek Brown apologised to them and the very least that can be done is an apology given to the parents.

1.22b A. Gerard said his last point in summing up was going to be an apology. This is very important to the Education and Families team and the lack of communication is regretted. That is why time has been spent developing the Powerpoint presentation. Cllr Brannan-McVey was correct, the Executive Director did offer an apology and he would like to offer his apologies now. Gerard does want to come back to us in the week of the 18th April but does take on board the questions being raised and is aware there are some more questions.

1.23a Q. Catherine: What is taking place over the next 4 weeks that will enable a decision to be made.

1.23b A. Gerard said we are going through a consultation and talking with trade unions.

1.24a Q. Catherine: Who is that consultation with.

1.24b A. Chryston Community. They have been given a timeline, a SWOT analysis has been done with pupils. Margaret, Michelle and Gerard have been in and spoken with the staff of both the primary and secondary and put out communication to all parents and carers and are looking at the various models regardless of size of establishment. Looking at the 5 business cases to make a decision. The week beginning the 18th will give the opportunity to update.

1.25a Q. Lorna: With a lack of applicants for HT roles and issue is the solution to create even bigger jobs the right solution so making the job bigger is this not a poor service for the children.

1.25b A. Gerard said they do not want to hinder the learning and teaching and attainment within a school. Education Scotland and the documents that will be sent give an overview on how these models work, - leader dependent, on whether they are willing to take on this additional role and responsibility. It has and can have a positive impact. Michelle gave the example of a Multi-Establishment Head who does things like HR, business processes, like a business manager, and sets the strategic direction and putting increased levels of support underneath provides the learning and teaching with specific focus around primary, secondary or mid-stages. It's about freeing up time for people to focus on the teaching and learning. That's a real change in focus, and their main business is improving outcomes for learners so tracking data is imperative. There are challenges around this because of COVID and that's where our feedback is really important. Michelle also apologised on behalf of her and Margaret for not providing information which in turn has put the parent councils into a difficult position with regard to informing the wider parent forum. Margaret also reiterated what Michelle said. She said they will listen to parent body, pupils, staff and form discussions from there. Margaret also added that some head teachers have been in their positions for a long time and may be looking for an opportunity to move to a new challenge and they have to provide opportunities

for those people who have initiative and innovative ideas on how to run the potential new model and may want to challenge themselves.

- 1.26a **Q. Nadine: [Cllr Brannan-McVey also asked this in the chat] why are we dependent on a consultation with another school when it's been made clear we are completely different. Also Chryston are currently a joint campus and you could argue that a MELM could work there but in the near future the primary will move to a new school which is off campus. We are not a joint campus, we are not a through school, can it be shared in the chat what Education Scotland document is being discussed? We are completely different to Chryston so if this is for you to learn how to do the consultation she could understand but as we do not display any similarities with the geography, type of schools what is the logic.**

Elaine: Mirrored the comment Cllr Brannan-McVey and Nadine as raised and added to it, if you are basing your decision on the consultation that isn't finishing until the 28th April how much more information can you give us if you are meeting us before it closes.

Jennifer: Main concern is around the timing. The MELM idea and Learning Together document is not new, as it was originally published in 2009 and updated in 2010, but it is new for us in North Lanarkshire and personally coming from an established council where they we have quality pool of deutes and the opportunities that arise for them to be placed in an acting post, North Lanarkshire aren't in that position. That is why we have this recruitment crisis and it's acknowledged that there is a looming leadership crisis in Scotland, with an estimated 2 in 5 HTs likely to leave their posts within the next five years. Point was also made about HTs not being there, worried about losing HTs and mothballing schools at the same time. There has also been a recent HMI assessment in St Patrick's that wasn't great and parents were looking towards a new HT coming in and taking those recommendations forward. Fully appreciate that COVID has affected everything but can't continue to hide behind it and really disappointed to hear it being used as justification for this situation.

- 1.26b **A. Gerard said to be clear we cannot compare this situation with Chryston at all. We are looking at lots of models regardless of the size. Second point about the consultation – feels that after the 28th is too long, and is confident he can give us an update in the week of the 18th. On recruitment we are putting out national adverts and not getting the applicants, Gerard accepts there is a leadership crisis. Gerard also apologised for what they have not done properly but not hiding behind COVID and still wants to come back to us week of the 18th so we feel we are being listen to and our points are taken on board. The feedback will be taken back to the senior leadership team meeting.**

No decision will be made until he comes back with an update the week of the 18th April.

- 1.27 **Claire clarified that Mrs Murphy will liaise with her staff before the end of this week, then liaise with PC and also we will receive the slides. Gerard confirmed that they will try and push forward the communication and distribute the slides accordingly. Mrs Murphy was very much involved in setting this meeting up so would like to arrange the next meeting directly with the PC chairs (Anne and Claire) to remove the burden from Mrs Murphy. Claire also thanked the council representatives for their time and apology.**

- 1.28 **Anne thanked everyone for their time.**

Learning together

*Opening up learning in
all-through schools*





Contents	Page
Foreword	
1. Introduction	1
Aim of the guide	1
All-through schools in context: where they are and what they look like	3
2. All-through schools: how good are we now?	6
3. All-through schools: how good can we be?	9
4. Opening up learning in all-through schools	15
5. Opening up learning through exploring and using people's views	17
6. Opening up learning through sharing learning and teaching in action	22
7. Opening up learning through exploring and using information and data	24
8. The way ahead	26



FOREWORD

In *Improving Scottish Education 2005-2008*¹, I said that all those engaged in supporting an individual's learning from pre-school through to continuing education should see themselves as part of a continuous and collective endeavour.

All-through schools, schools which include at least two stages of a young person's education within the one establishment, can provide positive environments for learning in which all staff work together to ensure that young people make successful transitions between the different stages in their education. Such schools are well placed to ensure that their young people experience challenge and progression through consistent, well-planned teaching which is flexible and responsive to their distinctive geographical, cultural and social contexts. The cross-sectoral working which is essential to support the learning of all children in Scotland should be a natural aspect of the work of all-through schools. It is one of the key expectations outlined in *Building the Curriculum 5*².

Information about the learning needs of children and young people and on their achievements needs to be shared effectively through collaborative planning and profiling. All partners have important roles in providing information, identifying needs, tracking and monitoring progress and providing ongoing support.

In all-through schools, joint working across the sectors should be built into the life and work of the school.

Other partnerships too are of particular importance to all-through schools. These include partnerships with other schools, both local pre-school centres and primary schools from which some of their children transfer, and local secondary schools to which their older students may move on for their senior years. Of particular importance are partnerships with parents, local employers and community groups. All-through schools, many of which are in relatively remote rural areas, have significant responsibilities to work with local partners in nurturing, supporting and educating their young people to be productive members of sustainable local communities, as well as confident citizens ready to step out into the wider world. All-through schools, like all schools, educate their young people to plan and make choices for the future, whether they remain within their local community or move elsewhere. To make these choices, young people need a broad awareness of all the possibilities, and high aspirations for what they can achieve. They must also develop the resilience to deal positively with the challenges of moving into what may be very different geographical, social and cultural environments, as many of them will.

In Scotland, there are all-through schools which have welcomed and embraced this challenging agenda. These schools have a clear vision of their role within the local community, within Scotland and, often, within a global context. Inspectors have

¹ *Improving Scottish Education: A report by HMIE on inspection and review 2005-2008*, HM Inspectorate of Education 2009.

² *Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment*, The Scottish Government 2010.



found that young people in all-through schools are often very positive about their experiences. They value the strong caring ethos and supportive relationships which many all-through schools exemplify.

Scotland needs young people who have developed the capabilities, skills and attributes which will enable them to contribute to the country's future economic prosperity. These young people also require personal and social qualities nurtured in educational environments which encourage them to reflect on their values and develop their confidence and wellbeing. This guide outlines some of the positive practice which inspectors have found during their visits to all-through schools. It also suggests some of the approaches which all-through schools can use to build on, and improve what they currently do. By reflecting on, and debating the issues it raises, I hope staff in all-through schools, their partners in the community and the services which support them will arrive at a shared view of what is important for their young people, for their community and for Scotland as a whole.

Graham HC Donaldson
HM Senior Chief Inspector



1. Introduction

Aim of the guide

The aim of this guide is to stimulate professional reflection, dialogue and debate about learning. Education professionals in Scotland are already aware of the key issues relating to learning through the series *Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum*, the recent publication *Learning Together: Opening Up Learning*³ and exemplification on *The Journey to Excellence* website. This guide builds on these messages and asks staff to consider them in the specific context of all-through schools.

An 'all-through' school is a school which has one headteacher who manages both a primary and a secondary department within the same building or group of buildings. An all-through school takes young people⁴ from nursery or P1 through to S2, S4 or S6. The guide may also be of interest to people working in and with co-located schools, which occupy the same campus but with the primary and secondary schools being managed separately.

This guide is for everyone who works to teach, support and improve the learning experiences of young people in all-through schools, including headteachers and school staff, local authority officers, partners in the local community and parents⁵.

The guide:

- explores the educational, social and cultural contexts within which all-through schools operate in education authorities across Scotland;
- draws together findings from inspections of all-through schools;
- considers how school leaders, school staff and local authority officers can improve learning in all-through schools, as they continue to review and develop the curriculum they provide; and
- provides reflective questions for use in professional discussion and development.

This guide is designed to be read in conjunction with its source publication, *Learning Together: Opening Up Learning (LTOUL)*. It does not repeat material from *LTOUL* but expects that readers will refer to it throughout, and provides specific page references where that would be helpful. The guide places the issues of *LTOUL* within the context of all-through schools and includes reflective questions relevant to their distinctive challenges and opportunities. Uniquely among educational establishments, all-through schools manage transitions in learning for most or almost

³ Learning Together: Opening up learning, HM Inspectorate of Education 2009.

⁴ Throughout this guide the terms 'young person' and 'young people' are used to refer to all children and young people between the ages of three and 18.

⁵ The term 'parents' should be taken to refer to parents, foster carers, carers who are relatives or friends and care staff in residential settings such as school hostel accommodation.



all of their young people from 3 to 18 within a single location. Lines of communication are shorter, collegiate working across sectors is potentially more manageable, and contexts for learning are more flexible. The guide encourages staff to consider how best to build on these features. Potential benefits for young people are, for example, positive relationships, enhanced support during transition, collaborative and active approaches to learning and strong community links.

The questions or groups of questions within this guide can be used as they stand, adapted and/or combined with questions from *LTOUL*. The aim is to stimulate thinking about the quality of education in all-through and co-located schools, and provide support for staff in planning, delivering and monitoring improvements, as they develop their own school's 'curriculum for excellence'.

We have not included specific case studies in this guide. Case studies of interesting practice in individual schools will be made available through the Glow network for all-through schools. You may also find it helpful to refer to the examples of excellent practice on The Journey to Excellence website, including the improvement guides (www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk), the quality indicators in *How good is our school?*, *The Child at the Centre*, and *How good is our community learning and development?*, and other materials and reports on the HMIE website and referred to in this guide (www.hmie.gov.uk).

This guide is a reference point for teachers in working together to improve outcomes for their learners, and planning for the changes that will be necessary as *Curriculum for Excellence* is implemented. It invites all-through schools to consider the following question.

What do we want young people in our communities to know, and to be able to do?

In posing this question, the guide highlights the areas of *Curriculum for Excellence* that are the responsibilities of all staff: literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing. In particular, it encourages all staff working together in all-through schools, to consider how best to develop in their young people important personal qualities for learning, life, and work in the 21st century. Attributes such as self-confidence, resilience, and ambition are characteristics which help all young people to develop their abilities as lifelong learners. Such characteristics are particularly important for young people in all-through schools as they move out of their local communities and into the wider world. They need to make positive transitions between the various stages of their schooling, and move on to positive destinations beyond school. They must also be supported and encouraged to make increasingly effective contributions that will help sustain their communities in the face of new challenges.

The guide goes on to explore how all-through schools can use self-evaluation to open up learning for all their young people as they embark on, and continue, their learning journey. For some young people in particular areas and establishments, this learning journey on one campus lasts for the entire 3 to 18 span of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Such schools are very well placed to realise the vision of smooth



progression in, and depth of, learning for all their young people. Other young people will transfer between primary schools and all-through schools, or all-through schools and secondary schools, and experience the strengths of these different kinds of establishments. All-through schools are no different from primary and secondary schools in their need to offer young people smooth, well-planned transitions in learning that provide suitable levels of personal support and build in equally suitable learning challenge for all. The guide identifies ways in which all-through schools are particularly well placed to be able to do this.

All-through schools in context: where they are and what they look like

A young person could begin his or her education in the south of Scotland and move to the northernmost island archipelago and still make the entire educational journey from 3 to 18 in an all-through school. A young person could leave his or her home on a western island and complete school education in central Scotland and still make the entire educational journey from 3 to 18 in an all-through school. In so doing, such young people could move from a school with a combined roll of around 60 or 70 young people (or fewer) to one with a combined roll of around 600 or 700, (or more).

Eight of Scotland's 32 local authorities maintain around 40 all-through schools, though not all would use this term to describe them. These education authorities are: all three of the nation's island authorities, Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles), together with Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Perth and Kinross, Highland and Glasgow City. Other local authorities are interested in the opportunities all-through and co-located schools have to offer young people.

Across Scotland, a wide range of patterns of schooling has developed, which reflect the distinctive contexts and needs of local communities. In some education authorities, young people pursue their education up to the end of S2 or S4 in schools designated as 'junior high schools'. In these areas, a small number of all-through schools also provide education up to S6. One education authority provides six-year secondary education in all of its all-through schools. Some education authorities are currently developing the range of educational provision which they offer. Some have begun to combine two or three stages of education in a joint campus which may comprise nursery, primary and secondary education on a single site. While not designated as all-through schools, such provision may be led by one headteacher, or campus manager, although the nursery, primary and secondary may operate as separate elements. Other co-located schools may have separate headteachers for each stage. However, such schools may share certain characteristics, contextual features and priorities with all-through schools.



Just as all-through schools across the country may vary in their location (urban or rural) and the educational stages they include, they also vary considerably in terms of pupil roll. Within schools, the proportion of young people in education at each stage also varies. For example, in P1 to S2 schools the primary roll is almost always greater than the S1–S2 roll. In nursery/P1 to S6 schools, which may also provide secondary education for all young people within a cluster, the secondary roll is generally proportionately larger.

These variable proportions can have implications for the balance of staffing in smaller all-through secondary departments, which in turn influences curriculum provision. For example, in schools with a smaller secondary roll, not all staff are necessarily full-time in school each week. The ratio of permanent to visiting staff may vary considerably, with a few schools providing secondary education almost entirely through visiting staff. Nationally, all-through schools are not always smaller than their secondary counterparts. Some have combined rolls, and secondary pupil populations within those rolls, which equate to middle-sized education authority secondary schools.

One significant issue for all-through schools is the extent to which young people and staff consider their school to be one or two schools, with or without a nursery class. The perceptions of staff and young people may differ on this issue.

To sum up, all-through schools:

- are mainly, but not always, set in rural areas;
- are mainly, but not always, smaller in size than their secondary counterparts; and
- are mainly, but not always, part of historic provision in particular geographical locations.

In some parts of the country, the concept of the all-through school is being expanded.



Notwithstanding their varying locations, size, and composition, all-through schools share the common characteristic of providing education across the primary and secondary transition for all, or for significant proportions of the young people within their communities.





2. All-through schools: how good are we now?

In recent years, inspection findings in all-through schools have consistently identified the following strengths:

- climate and ethos, including the quality of relationships;
- partnerships with parents and the local community; and
- meeting the needs of young people with additional support needs.

In over one third of schools, HMI identified the quality of support for young people with additional needs as a key strength. The quality of the ethos was a key strength in around half of schools inspected. Staff are regularly commended for their care and consideration for young people. Inspection reports frequently note the very high quality of relationships embodying mutual respect between teachers and learners in all-through schools.

All-through schools build well on strong links with parents which may often have their roots in connections established in the early years and primary stages of children's education. In all-through schools these links can create contexts which enable very positive outcomes for learners.

In all-through schools, local partnerships can lead to curricula which contribute directly to their communities' wider social and cultural goals. For example, inspection reports note the steps taken in Shetland to maintain cultural traditions in music and in the islands' distinctive dialect. Young people have access to music tuition which carries on the local tradition of fiddle playing. They have frequent opportunities to write and speak in their own dialect as well as in standard English. Similarly, schools in the Highlands and Islands may make important contributions to maintaining and developing Gaelic culture, language and heritage.

A key priority, particularly in sparsely populated or relatively isolated areas of the country, is the issue of sustainability. Some all-through schools demonstrate strong practice in helping young people develop skills for learning, life and work which are contextualised within their own local area. Like schools across Scotland, some all-through schools specifically develop their curriculum so that it relates directly to the local context and the needs of the local community. The rural settings of some all-through schools may mean an even greater emphasis on developing entrepreneurial and work-related skills in their young people which are specifically linked with their local context, for example, skills and experience in hospitality, boatbuilding or crofting. This is particularly important where those who remain are a relatively small proportion of the total school leaver population. However, responding to the employment, cultural or economic needs of the local community is not only a rural issue. Joint campuses and co-located schools in urban areas facilitate joint working among schools and other partners, and provide shared approaches to addressing local issues. Glasgow Gaelic School provides Gaelic-medium education in an all-through setting.



Sometimes, in particular rural and urban contexts, schools may feel it important to develop enterprising attitudes, work ethics and values among young people which are also attitudes and values essential to ensuring the sustainability of the local community. Developing and nurturing skills in personal effectiveness are important if we want young people to make positive choices about their future lives.



While it is important for all-through schools in rural locations to prepare their young people for living and working in the local area, it is equally important to prepare them for education and employment elsewhere. Young people across Scotland need 'more choices and chances', including those in more remote areas for whom 'geographical exclusion' from educational and other opportunities can be a real risk. All young people need to develop generic skills which they can take anywhere in the world and use in whatever jobs and activities are available. Staff have important roles in developing and nurturing high aspirations among all young people. Living in a particular area of the country should not be seen as an obstacle to further study, employment or training or as implying that certain abilities, talents or skills are less important to the young people who live there than to young people in the rest of Scotland.

Young people will need a wide range of knowledge, skills and attributes in their daily lives and relationships which are valued by their families, communities, colleges, universities and employers, if they are to become successful, confident, responsible and effective adults who can meet the challenges of life and work in the 21st century.

Building the curriculum 4: skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

All-through schools can provide examples of good and indeed, innovative practice in learning and teaching within the school-based curriculum which is of an equivalent quality to practice in separate primary and secondary schools. Teachers need to build on these strong foundations to provide further levels of challenge to learners within all-through schools. They can do this by drawing on the benefits of their all-



through context, for example, the opportunities for flexibility provided by their pattern of staffing, their shared accommodation and facilities and the availability of peer support across age and stage. In so doing, all-through schools can enhance the experiences of their learners significantly by providing the active, creative and flexible approaches to learning described within *Curriculum for Excellence*.



3. All-through schools: how good can we be?

One of the key issues in all-through schools is the extent to which the school community regards the school as one school rather than two schools under one roof. The challenge for school leaders, and for the headteacher in particular, is to have an accurate and detailed knowledge of the quality of education across all the stages and to set similarly high standards and expectations at every level. To do this successfully, they must have a vision of the school as one school, a school at the heart of its community.

When developing the vision and values for your school, the following question should be at the heart of your discussions with young people, parents and members of the community.

What do we want young people in our community to know, and to be able to do?

Reflective questions about vision, values and aspirations

- What do we know of our young people's aspirations, and those of their parents and the community generally? How well matched are these aspirations to their progress, achievements and interests so far?
- To what extent do our vision and values communicate the concept of the school being at the heart of the community, and of learners developing their capacities in a broad community context and contributing to the sustainability of the local community? To what extent do they also relate to the need to extend learners' knowledge and understanding of the wider world beyond their community?
- How do we ensure that any choices young people make about their future lives are based on a genuine understanding of the opportunities and challenges both within their own communities and within the wider world?
- To what extent does the vision for our all-through school embrace the needs and aspirations of learners at all stages? How successful are we at delivering this vision across all stages in the school?
- How do we recognise and celebrate the broader achievements of young people of all ages both within and beyond the school?

These questions have implications for young people's expectations and achievements. All-through schools have traditionally demonstrated strengths in the outcomes they achieve for young people by the end of S4. The key issue is the extent to which these young people build effectively on this achievement by the end of S6, either in their own school or in the establishment in which they continue their education at S5/S6.



Many all-through schools are situated in centres of population that may be at a distance from the next destinations in young people's education, training or employment. All-through schools and their local communities need to consider how well they are helping young people to develop the resilience that will sustain them as they make transitions to the next stages of their learning and enable them to achieve well. Resilience has been defined as "the achievement of normal outcomes in difficult circumstances". The *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes relating to mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing and planning for choices and changes are particularly relevant here. In all-through schools there may be need for an increased focus on developing young people's awareness of the range of choices and routes of progression available to them throughout their broad general education. Such an awareness ensures they are well equipped for decisions about where and how they learn, and how they can carry on their learning.

Reflective questions about resilience

- How well do we prepare our young people for important transitions in their learning at each of the all-through stages?
- In particular, how well do we support them in managing transitions in their senior years S4–S6?
- How successful are we at developing our young people's capacities to learn independently and effectively while they are still members of our learning community so that they are well prepared for the educational, personal and social challenges in their future lives?

All-through schools are well placed to support young people's learning in the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*. However, recent inspection reports note only a few instances where schools are exploiting their all-through context to the full and enabling young people to reap the benefits. There is scope for all-through schools to exploit more fully the flexibility afforded by their all-through educational provision both in planning the curriculum and in delivering learning. This should involve young people from different stages working together, including across the late primary and early secondary stages. Through shared contexts for learning, children and young people can make links between their learning in different areas of the curriculum, and build effectively on what they have already learned. The all-through context provides valuable opportunities for staff to develop innovative approaches to delivering the entitlements of a broad general education, responsive to their particular context, whether that be within a nursery/P1 to S2 school, a nursery/P1 to S4 school or a nursery/P1 to S6 school.

The key to ensuring smoother and more effective transitions for all learners from stage to stage of their learning lies in the extent to which teachers are aware of, and use all the available information about individual young people's progress to plan suitable next steps in learning. The *Curriculum for Excellence: Strategic Vision and*



*Key Principles*⁶ highlights the importance of collaborative working especially at transitions.

The practices for arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations involve teachers:

- ***working together from the guidance provided to plan learning, teaching and assessment;***
- ***building on existing standards and expectations;***
- ***drawing on exemplification; and***
- ***engaging with colleagues to share and confirm expectations.***

Quality assurance and moderation have to strike the right balance between effort and sustainability by having approaches across 3 to 18 that are appropriate to the ages and stages of learners and are proportionate.

Curriculum for Excellence: Strategic Vision and Key Principles

Through participation in moderation activities, teams of teachers, and their partner providers, can develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations across transitions, ensure these are applied consistently and plan effectively for progression and achievement. This shared understanding is particularly important in all-through schools which may have a large number of visiting specialist teachers and other providers. All-through schools also have the advantage, however, of having internal communities which are, by nature, cross-sectoral. By exploiting their distinctive opportunities for flexible deployment, they can develop creative learning communities, involving both teachers and learners, which are well placed to meet the particular needs of their young people. The all-through context also has the potential to stimulate the development of imaginative approaches which focus on achieving high levels of success for all.



⁶ Curriculum for Excellence: Strategic Vision and Key Principles, Scottish Government 2009.



Reflective questions about curriculum and transitions

- How well are we using our all-through or co-located learning environment to ensure that accurate, timely, and suitably detailed information on young people's learning is exchanged among staff at key points of transition?
- How successful are we at developing across our all-through school, as well as with other local schools, a shared understanding of standards and expectations of progression and achievement, especially at transitions?
- To what extent do we work together across the stages to plan the curriculum, identify and select resources and improve learning?
- How well do we use specialist accommodation and staff, including visiting staff, to extend young people's learning experiences across the school?
- How well are we addressing any staffing challenges so that young people continue to receive their entitlements to a coherent curriculum with a broad general education and a senior phase?
- How flexible are our curricular provision and learning approaches in meeting the needs of all young people and providing them with the experiences and outcomes outlined in *Curriculum for Excellence*, despite small numbers at particular stages?
- How well do we work in partnership with local schools and other providers on developing our curriculum to ensure that all young people can progress in their learning?
- How much do we know about the range of opportunities for external recognition and accreditation of young people's achievements across the age range, and how well do we use them within the school curriculum?

All-through schools need to ensure that in improving transitions within their own establishments, they do not neglect transitions with the other local primary schools from which young people transfer at S1.

All-through schools also need to consider the implications for transition, and plan to meet the learning needs of individual young people who may have moved into the area from elsewhere in Scotland, the UK or beyond. Some of these young people may have significant additional support needs, which require the provision and planning of specific resources. They may also be high attaining and/or have particular talents and abilities. As soon as any young people move into the local area, they rightly become the responsibility of the school in exactly the same way as if they had been born in the local area. They have entitlements to learning and support, and for their needs to be met appropriately. They may also need personal



support in making the transition to a very different geographical, social and cultural context.

The principle of ensuring effective and smooth transitions also applies to progress in personal development. *Ready for Life: education for personal and social development in primary schools*⁷ identified a range of signposts to good practice in supporting young people's personal development which are as relevant to all-through schools as to primary schools.

Reflective questions about developing mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing

- To what extent is there coherence among programmes delivering the *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes across all the stages of our all-through school, in particular those relating to personal and social development (PSD)?
- How well do we use assessment and personal learning planning to support learning across the stages and to ensure that young people have a better understanding of what they are trying to achieve and what they need to do next in order to progress emotionally and socially, and to improve their skills in learning?
- How successful are we at engaging parents of children at all stages of the school, including those who are anxious, or reluctant to attend school events, in the school's PSD programme and their children's progress?
- How good are we at drawing on the full range of young people's interests, skills, aptitudes and achievements, including those demonstrated out of school, to promote relevance in learning in PSD and across the curriculum?
- How well do we build on young people's experiences and achievements at the primary stages to ensure that their learning throughout their secondary education continues to be relevant and personalised, and fits them for life in the 21st century?
- How good are we at developing our young people's capacity to learn and live independently, both within our community and beyond, and their resilience in coping with challenges of different kinds?

⁷ *Ready for Life: education for personal and social development in primary schools*, HM Inspectorate of Education 2006.



The emphasis within the *Curriculum for Excellence* on developing literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing holistically through the experiences and outcomes offers all-through schools opportunities to:

- kindle young people's aspirations to achieve ambitious personal goals;
- build their resilience; and
- develop their dispositions for lifelong learning.



The environment for learning within all-through schools can provide a very positive and distinctive context for developing the capacities, attributes and capabilities of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Opportunities for collaborative activities across the stages and for taking responsibility for much younger pupils can help young people relate well to others from different age groups, learn to manage their own behaviour and recognise their own part in acting as role models. All-through schools have the potential to become strong, nurturing and mutually supportive communities in which the qualities of trust, empathy, support and resilience can develop and flourish. Young people in all-through schools tend to 'look out for' each other, and younger children observe patterns of behaviour and examples of academic, personal and social achievement to which they can aspire.



Reflective questions about goals and achievements

- How well do we support young people in setting and achieving goals at each stage of their learning, that will help them to realise their aspirations?
- How well do we use our all-through environment for learning to extend the learning of all young people, including those who are higher attaining, and those with particular skills and talents?
- How effectively do we build on young people's learning across the range of contexts in the all-through school and its community so that they develop their awareness of their achievements and plan for progression?
- How successful are we at helping young people develop curiosity and openness to learning new things in new ways and in new surroundings, and demonstrate perseverance in the face of challenges?
- How much do we know about our young people's successes in the settings to which they transfer when they leave our school? How well do we use this knowledge to improve practice within our own school?



4. Opening up learning in all-through schools

In the period from 2000 to 2009, fewer than half of all-through schools inspected were evaluated as good or better at using self-evaluation to improve outcomes for learners. The need to get better at using self-evaluation to improve the school has featured as a main point for action in around two-thirds of schools inspected. In *Improving Scottish Education*⁸, HMIE made the same point in relation to primary and secondary schools.

When groups of teachers get together to discuss how to improve learning for young people, the conversation often revolves around courses and programmes of work. For example, they might talk about structure and sequence, whether of topics or sections or modules, or the texts or worksheets used.

All of these considerations are very important. However, there is often less discussion about what learning is and how it takes place or, adopting the learner's perspective, how learning can be organised for the best possible outcomes – the professional craft of teaching.

In schools, you might sometimes hear people say, 'that was a good lesson' or 'that was a good activity'. How did they know? What did the learners think about that particular lesson? Are we sure it was a successful lesson from the learners' point of view?

How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence Part 1

In all-through schools, as in all other schools, opening up learning requires teachers to refer to three key sources of evidence (See *LTOUL* pages 8-12).



⁸ *Improving Scottish Education*, HM Inspectorate of Education 2009.



5. Opening up learning through exploring and using people's views

What do young people think about learning in our all-through school?

*Good Listeners - the Context: hearing the voices of children and young people*⁹ reminds us of the importance of consultation and participation being meaningful and worthwhile. See page 9 for the 'Ladder of Participation' which leads from 'manipulation' to 'engagement'. The linked publication *Good Listeners: hearing the voices of children in primary and special schools*¹⁰ provides a number of examples of good practice which are immediately applicable to the all-through context.

The key phrase in the first three questions below is "about their learning". *Improving Scottish Education* makes clear that while schools are increasingly seeking and taking account of young people's views, they have yet to engage them fully effectively in talking about what, how, and how well they are learning. It is also important for teachers in all-through schools to reflect on how effective these discussions are across all sectors of the school from the point where young people enter, until they leave. The questions below are designed to be used in conjunction with the questions in *LTOUL Annex 2*, page 56-57.

Reflective questions on exploring young people's views

- How good are we at gathering our young people's views about their learning across all the stages in our all-through school?
- How effective are we at engaging young people in decision making at all stages within the school?
- How well do we take account of our young people's views about their learning in framing plans for improvement across the whole school and within nursery, primary and secondary departments?
- What has changed and improved in the continuum of our young people's learning as they progress through all the stages in the school? How do we know?

As well as seeking and acting on the views of young people, schools also need to be responsive to other groups which are important partners in the education of young people.

⁹ *Good Listeners - the Context: hearing the voices of children and young people*, HM Inspectorate of education 2009.

¹⁰ *Good Listeners: hearing the voices of children in primary and special schools*, HM Inspectorate of education 2009.



What do parents think about learning in our all-through school?

Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of links with parents and the wider community has been a longstanding strength of all-through schools. Nonetheless, schools need to build on these positive relationships to include parents more fully as active partners in their children's education. They also need to ensure that parental views contribute to the school's knowledge of itself and of how well it meets the needs of its young people and their parents and carers. In addition to the reflective questions in Annex 3 of *LTOUL*, staff should consider the extent to which they maintain and develop links established with parents at the nursery and primary stages as young people move into the secondary department.

The good practice below comes from a stand-alone pre-school centre.

Involving parents and young people in making decisions about learning

Staff evaluated their approaches to involving parents in the life of the centre. They set out to engage parents and young people much more in making decisions about what happens in the centre. Staff made innovative changes, including setting up a web forum for parents to talk directly with other parents. Parents and young people now take part in discussing changes in curriculum programmes, staff child interactions, and in designing spaces. Parents and young people have benefited through learning together, being more reflective and being able to ask questions about learning.

LTOUL page 20

Consider the extent to which your school has consistently supported parents in developing their understanding of young people's learning at all stages. The questions below are designed to be used in conjunction with the questions in *LTOUL* Annex 3, page 58.



Reflective questions on exploring parents' views

- How might good practice similar to that in the pre-school centre above be extended into the primary department of an all-through school?
- What issues might arise for both parents and staff as the practice extends into the secondary stages of the school? How would you deal constructively with these?
- To what extent are the views that parents offer informed by their understanding of young people's learning at each stage of their school experience? How do we use them to improve learning across the school?
- How have we used our open evenings, curriculum events, information leaflets and/or the school website to develop their understanding of learning in an all-through context and raise aspirations?

What do staff think about learning in our all-through school?

In all-through schools, staff lead learning in a working environment that includes at least two stages of young people's education, and very possibly three, from nursery through primary and into one or more stages of secondary. Teachers in all-through schools are therefore well placed to gain first hand knowledge of their learners' experiences throughout these stages. A key issue is how well informed teachers are about young people's prior learning experiences, progress and achievements at all stages in the school. To achieve this understanding and develop the quality of education consistently across the school, teachers need to work together on the processes of self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Headteachers and promoted staff in particular need to develop a detailed awareness of the quality of education at all stages. To develop this awareness, they need to observe learning across all stages of the school. The questions below are designed to be used in conjunction with the questions in *LTOUL* Annex 4, page 59.



Reflective questions when considering how staff learn together

- To what extent do those of us who work mainly in the secondary department observe learning and/or engage in cooperative teaching in the primary department?
- To what extent do those of us who work mainly in the primary department observe learning and/or engage in cooperative teaching in the secondary department?
- To what extent do we provide opportunities for teachers across primary and secondary departments and those from other local schools to work together to ensure a coherent approach to planning learning, teaching and assessment and to share standards and expectations?
- What use have we made of our observations, through discussing them with peers and/or reflecting on our own practice? How has our practice changed as a result?

All teachers in all-through schools need a secure understanding of their school's curriculum from 3 to 18, and of the curriculum in other establishments to which their pupils may transfer at S2 or S4. *Curriculum for Excellence* defines the curriculum as the totality of experiences which are planned for each young person. The *Getting it right for every child* approach places increased emphasis on child-centred partnerships and collaborations. All-through schools often play a very important role within their communities and can build on their strengths in this regard.

What do our community partners think about learning in our all-through schools?

A wide range of adults may contribute to delivering the curriculum and supporting learners in all-through schools. Staff need to build on their community links, an area of strength in all-through schools. Such links can extend opportunities for young people to learn within and beyond the school. All contributors to a young person's education should be fully involved in self-evaluation for improvement, including staff from health and police services, other council services, colleges and other educational establishments, youth work and community learning and development services, voluntary organisations, businesses, and employers. In seeking the views of adults who contribute to young people's learning and personal development, school leaders should consider the extent and the effectiveness of consultation with partners in other agencies and services, as well as community organisations and employers. See *LTOUL Annex 4* page 59.



Reflective question on community links

- How well does the school know its local community? How well does it work with the community to improve learning and enrich the curriculum for all young people from 3 to 18?
- To what extent has the school developed a shared understanding with community partners of standards and expectations across the stages, and of their own roles and responsibilities?
- What structures are in place to support partnership working? How can partnerships with outside agencies and community organisations be improved?
- How effective are local networking arrangements? What arrangements are in place for effective joint partnership planning and evaluation?
- How do local businesses contribute to young people's learning across the stages, and what arrangements are in place to support this?
- How well does the school liaise with local college provision to ensure young people's needs are met effectively?



6. Opening up learning through sharing learning and teaching in action

Learning Together: Opening Up Learning (LTOUL pages 30-41) offers advice on ways to organise and share findings of learning visits that will help staff build an accurate picture of their professional practice and its impact on their learners' experiences. Key features of effective practice are listed on page 38.

Given the professional isolation of teachers in many all-through schools, it is also important to recognise the place of the learning visit and its attendant discussion and reflection in helping teachers take on still more effectively their personal responsibility for planning how to meet their own development needs.

Annex 6 in *LTOUL* (page 61) provides questions for staff to reflect upon in the context of learning visits. Importantly, staff in all-through schools are well placed to develop their knowledge and understanding of their young people's learning experience and their progress in learning through direct observation of learning at all stages of their development.

Reflective questions about learning

- To what extent do learning experiences build on prior learning? How well is assessment information used to help guide progression within stages and from stage to stage within our all-through school?
- To what extent do teaching approaches at all stages promote learner engagement and encourage individual learners to take responsibility for organising their learning with others, working collaboratively in groups and teams, and giving presentations to their peers across the stages?
- How does our school ensure that such activities are progressive and provide young people with increasingly greater challenge as they progress through the school?
- How do secondary staff in our all-through school use learning visits at P6/P7 to observe how young people at this stage take responsibility for their own learning? How do they build on this knowledge to ensure suitable support and challenge in their S1 experience to meet the needs of all learners effectively?
- To what extent are staff in all-through and co-located schools capitalising on their single-site context for learning to improve outcomes for learners?



Staff in all-through schools are also well placed to develop whole-school approaches to planning for and organising learning in relation to the *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes. For example, staff would benefit from working collegiately across the school and using findings from a learning visit or visits to explore expectations of what learners should know and be able to do at particular levels of *Curriculum for Excellence*. In relation to the literacy outcomes, for example, they could consider issues such as the following.

- What, for example, might staff across the school expect an able learner to be able to do in presenting to his or her peers at, say, P5?
- What standards of literacy would be hallmarks of success in achieving outcome LIT 2-10a or LIT 3a?

“I am developing confidence when engaging with others within and beyond my place of learning. I can communicate in a clear expressive way and I am learning to select and organise resources independently.”





7. Opening up learning through exploring and using information and data

All-through schools must equip themselves to become as “data rich” as possible. They should gather and interpret data to help gauge their success in providing effectively for all their young people and to help each learner progress and achieve. See *LTOUL* pages 44-50.

In the introduction, this guide noted the context and composition of all-through schools across Scotland. All-through schools are not invariably small schools. However, many are, and for small schools data and its interpretation can require caution. Small numbers expressed as percentages can present pictures that may exaggerate strengths and minimise areas for improvement, or, indeed, vice versa. Variable numbers of young people presented in discrete subjects at the secondary stages may present some secondary departments with data which has, if not gaps, then very possibly data of doubtful statistical validity. The catchment area for the primary department may be different, or smaller, than the catchment area for the secondary department. Examination results at S5 and S5/S6 may include data from young people who have been at junior high schools, in addition to those who have attended the S6 school throughout their school career.



However, having acknowledged these cautionary aspects of data gathering and interpretation given small pupil rolls, it is important to recognise that all-through schools, like all other schools, must take proper account of measurable information on performance. These measures include more than data on young people’s attainment in assessments and examinations. As elsewhere, they include data checked against clearly-stated expectations of attendance, behaviour and punctuality and data on post-school destinations and other measures.



Whereas all-through schools will need to exercise caution in using national comparisons and comparisons with other schools, they are in an ideal position to track the progress and achievements of every one of their learners from entry in nursery/P1 until exit at S2, S4 or S6. This enables them to evaluate the value added by the school overall, and at different stages. Again, despite the same provisos, all-through schools can still focus on the extent to which there is evidence overall of improvement over time, while taking account of any discontinuities. P1 to S2 and P1 to S4 schools will also gain a great deal of useful information by working with their local S6 secondary school to track the performance of their learners following transfer, in order to identify aspects for improvement in the quality of education and support which they themselves provide. When evaluating the value they add to the achievements of their learners, S6 schools may find it helpful to look at the performance of young people who have joined their school from junior high schools separately from the performance of those who have attended their own school throughout their secondary school career.

All-through schools can also learn a great deal from using benchmarking information provided by their education authority, and by directly comparing their own practice and performance with that of other all-through schools operating in a similar context, which they have identified themselves.

Reflective questions on achievement

- To what extent are our approaches to assessment, feedback and next steps consistent across all stages of the school, and sufficiently rigorous and robust to enable progress to be monitored at individual, class and stage levels?
- How good are we at identifying at an early stage those who require additional support with their learning, including those who are higher attaining, and ensuring they receive appropriate support at all stages in the school?
- How effectively is data from assessments, both internal and external, transferred across stages within the school, and how well do we use this data to build on prior attainment?
- How much do we know about how well our learners achieve when they go to the S6 secondary school or to training or further study at college or university?
- How do we use this information to improve our curriculum, our learning and teaching approaches and our programme for personal and social development?



8. The way ahead



Bringing about improvements in learning is the core business of all-through schools, just as it is of all schools in Scotland, rural and urban, large and small, pre-school, primary or secondary.

All-through schools have significant advantages on which to build in meeting the learning needs of all the children and young people whom they serve. These advantages include positive relationships among members of the school community and strong links with parents and key community partners. Other benefits include the opportunities within all-through schools for cross-sectoral working to support learning, for flexibility in deploying staff and resources and for active and collaborative learning experiences contextualised within the local community.

By building on these positive features, all-through schools, working with local authority officers and community partners, are well placed to improve learners' experiences and outcomes. The following are priority areas for reflection, discussion, planning and action.

- The quality and nature of dialogue about learning among all practitioners within the all-through school community, and with parents and partners.
- The design of learning experiences which are imaginative and active and build on prior achievement.
- Transitions in learning between the various stages of schooling, and to positive destinations beyond school.
- Support for all young people in developing the resilience to make and sustain these transitions and achieve the best possible outcomes in the long term.



The aim of this guide has been to identify some of the key challenges and opportunities for all-through schools and the communities which they serve, and to stimulate professional reflection, dialogue and debate about improvements in practice and outcomes.

We hope that this professional sharing and dialogue will continue through networking among the all-through community, using technology such as GLOW. This short guide is just a start.

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Further information is available from:

HM Inspectorate of Education
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston
EH54 6GA

Tel: 01506 600 200

Fax: 01506 600 337

Email: enquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk



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423



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