# Curriculum for Excellence Information Booklet



# PORTLETHEN ACADEMY 2013





#### **INTRODUCTION**

This booklet is intended for parents and carers of pupils during session 2013-14. It aims to provide some key information about the national Curriculum for Excellence programme and the new SQA exam structure that will be introduced in 2013-14.

Curriculum for Excellence is a national development which is being introduced over several years. It affects all stages of education from 3-18 and is now in the fourth year of development and implementation in all Scottish secondary schools having been introduced in session 2010-11.

The information on the following pages is designed to explain some of the key elements of the new curriculum which is structured in a different way to the previous curriculum. I hope you will find this booklet informative and that it answers some of the questions that you may have.

I would like to assure you that Portlethen Academy is taking a careful and considered approach to the changes that the new curriculum requires and that we are working within the guidelines and expectations of Education Scotland, the national education body, and Aberdeenshire Council Education, Learning and Leisure Service.

We aim to provide a curriculum that will enable all our pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding and to be successful. We will do this by providing good opportunities to learn and achieve within a positive and creative school environment. Partnership and dialogue with parents and carers is very important to the school so please contact us if you have any questions.

Neil Morrison HEAD TEACHER





#### HOW IS CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE ORGANISED?

This section of the booklet aims to provide you with some key information about how the new curriculum has been designed and organised.

#### The Four Capacities

You are probably already aware that the new curriculum aims to support the development of 'Four Capacities' in pupils as they move through their education. Developing these capacities will help prepare young people to become well informed and responsible members of society.

The capacities and what they mean are explained below.

#### successful learners

- with:

  enthusiasm and motivation for learning

  determination to reach high standards of achievement.
- achievement
   openness to new thinking and ideas
   and able to:
   use literacy, communication and numeracy
  skills

- skills

  use technology for learning

  think creatively and independently

  learn independently and as part of a group

  make reasoned evaluations

  link and apply different kinds of learning in
  new situations.

#### confident individuals

- with

  self-respect

  a sense of physical, mental and emotional well-being

  secure values and beliefs

  ambition

- secure values and beliefs
   ambition
   and able to
   relate to others and manage themselves
   pursue a healthy and active lifestyle
   be self-aware
   develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world
   live as independently as they can
   assess risk and make informed decisions
   achieve success in different areas of activity.

- To enable all young people to become:

#### responsible citizens

- with:

  respect for others

  commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life and able to:

  develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it

  understand different beliefs and cultures

  make informed choices and decisions

  evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues

  develop informed, ethical views of complex issues.

#### effective contributors

- with:
   an enterprising attitude
   resilience
   self-reliance
   and able to:
   communicate in different ways and in different settings
   work in partnership and in teams
   take the initiative and lead
   apply critical thinking in new contexts
   create and develop
   solve problems





#### What is the Curriculum?

Curriculum for Excellence takes a much broader view of the curriculum than previously and includes four main elements.

Curriculum areas and subjects	These are the ways in which learning is organised and delivered in classes e.g. maths, english, science and performing arts.
Interdisciplinary	There is much more 'joined up' learning
Learning	between and across subjects in the new
	curriculum. This helps make learning more
	relevant and realistic.
Ethos and life of the	Within the school a positive ethos and
school	atmosphere supports learning in its widest
	sense and supports the development of the
	four capacities.
Opportunities for	Both within the classroom and beyond we aim
personal achievement	to provide opportunities which encourage
	challenge, satisfaction, motivation and
	resilience.

## The Curriculum Areas and Subjects

These form the main part of pupil timetables. There are eight curriculum areas in the secondary curriculum. Each contains a range of subjects. Pupils will have studied across these curriculum areas at primary school.

The 8 Curriculum Areas		
Expressive Arts	Languages and Literacy	
Sciences	Mathematics and Numeracy	
Social Studies	Health and Wellbeing	
Technologies	Religious and Moral Education	

• Each of the eight curriculum areas includes a number of 'Experiences and Outcomes' around which teachers plan their work with classes.





• Within the new curriculum all teachers will focus on Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing. These 3 areas develop skills that underpin and support success in all other areas of learning.

#### THE SECONDARY CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

The secondary curriculum is divided into two main stages as shown below.

S1-S3	Broad General Education	<ul> <li>All pupils follow a common course which includes study across all eight curriculum areas.</li> <li>This builds on learning from primary school.</li> <li>Pupils will have increasing opportunities to achieve and study in depth as they progress through their Broad General Education.</li> <li>In third year pupils will have the opportunity for some personalisation and choice in their curriculum. Towards the end of S2 they will choose courses from each curriculum area for study in S3.</li> </ul>

S4 - S6	Senior Phase	<ul> <li>In the Senior Phase pupils will choose courses for qualifications. These will include the new SQA National 3, 4 and 5 courses as well as Higher and Advanced Higher.</li> <li>Towards the end of S3, S4 and S5 pupils will choose the SQA national exams that they wish to follow when they move into S4, S5 and S6.</li> <li>They will be supported in their choices by their guidance teachers and advice from subject teachers.</li> </ul>
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#### THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

- Assessment in the Broad General Education continues to use the Curriculum for Excellence Level system used in primary school.
- Assessment in the Senior Phase may use a variety of qualifications but mainly the new SQA Exam certificates.

Stage	Assessed by
S1-S3 Broad General Education	Mainly by Curriculum for Excellence Levels 3 and 4 Teachers will use a variety of assessment techniques to determine pupil progress
S4-S6 Senior Phase	Mainly by SQA Exams at National 3, 4, 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Other qualifications may include Skills for Work, Open University and Vocational opportunities.

Full parental reports will be issued annually in addition to tracking reports which will monitor progress at regular intervals.

At the end of the Broad General Education (S3) parents and pupils will receive-

- A Pupil Report outlining progress and achievement in each of the curriculum areas. This will be written by your child's subject teachers and his or her Guidance teacher.
- A Pupil Profile which is a summary of the key achievements that the pupil has made during his or her Broad General Education. This will be written by the pupil with the support and guidance of teachers.





### SOME FACTS ABOUT THE NEW SQA EXAMS

- Many parents and carers will be familiar with the old SQA exam system that is being replaced as from 2013-14.
- The table below shows the old and new exams and how they compare.

New Exams starting 2013-14	;	Old Exams
National 3	=	Standard Grade Foundation or Access 3
National 4	=	Standard Grade General or Intermediate 1
National 5	=	Standard Grade Credit or Intermediate 2
Higher	=	Higher
Advanced Higher	=	Advanced Higher

#### **HOW ARE THE NEW EXAM COURSES ASSESSED?**

This table summarises the assessment system that the SQA and schools will use from 2013-14 onwards.

Course	Internal Assessment	External Exam
National 3	Yes	No
National 4	Yes	No
National 5	Yes	Yes
Higher	Yes	Yes
Advanced Higher	Yes	Yes





# Aberdeenshire Council Education, Learning and Leisure Policy for the implementation and development of Curriculum for Excellence

All Aberdeenshire secondary schools are required to follow the Council policy and expectations for the new curriculum that were published in May 2012.

The key points in this policy are -

- 1. A Broad General Education to the end of S3 is essential.
- 2. All schools will implement the new SQA qualifications from 2013-14.
- 3. The experiences that pupils have in the Broad General Education should support transition into the Senior Phase but should not predetermine young people's options for qualifications from S4.
- 4. All schools will run a combined S4-S6 Senior Phase no later than 2014 -15.

This policy will ensure that there is consistency in the curriculum that is offered across all seventeen secondary schools in Aberdeenshire.

The curriculum will also be broadly similar to that on offer in many other Council areas.

The information on the next two pages summarises how this Council policy will shape the two stages of the curriculum in Portlethen Academy.





#### SUMMARY OF THE OVERALL PLAN FOR THE CURRICULUM

The secondary curriculum has two stages

- S1-S3 Broad General Education
- S4-S6 The Senior Phase

#### Stage 1 - The Broad General Education

#### What happens in the Broad General Education?

- Learning will take place across all eight curriculum areas from S1-S3
- In S1 and S2 all pupils will follow a common course. Level 3 outcomes and experiences will be covered.
- In S3 there will be the opportunity for some personalisation and choice within curricular areas.

# How will pupils choose courses for S3?

- S2 Pupils will choose subjects for S3. The choice process will be in February
- Pupil choices must cover all curriculum areas
- Choice will be made on a structured choice form
- All pupils also do a 'core' of PSE, RME and PE

# What happens in S3?

- The level of work in S3 will mainly be Curriculum for Excellence Level 4
- Curriculum for Excellence Level 4 is broadly equivalent to the new SQA National 4 so will support progress in Senior Phase courses
- · Work will be monitored and assessed through the year
- There will be an end of year Report and S3 Profile
- At end of S3 pupils will choose up to six SQA courses to follow in S4





#### **Stage 2 - The Senior Phase**

#### What happens in the Senior Phase?

- Pupils will work towards SQA and other qualifications
- In Aberdeenshire there will be a combined S4-6 Senior Phase subject choice process in all schools
- This means that most courses will be open to pupils from any of the three year groups
- The benefit of this arrangement is that there will be a broader range of courses open to pupils as they move through the Senior Phase

# When will pupils choose courses for the Senior Phase?

• Towards the end of the school year S3, S4 and S5 pupils will choose courses for S4, S5 and S6

# What will pupils do?

- In S4 most pupils will follow six SQA courses
- In S5 and S6 pupils will follow up to five SQA courses
- Senior Phase classes may include pupils from S4 S6
- We will seek to ensure that there are flexible pathways for pupils in the Senior Phase. This will enable pupils to achieve a broad range of qualifications to support their future plans as they progress through the Senior Phase
- Pupils will be able to return to a subject and level at a later stage during their Senior Phase to diversify their portfolio of qualifications e.g. pupils can pick up National 4 or 5 courses when they are in S5 or S6
- In exceptional circumstances pupils may be able to achieve Higher qualifications in S4

#### What are the Senior Phase 'Core' Courses?

- In S4 all pupils will do English and Maths
- Pupils will also follow courses in PSE, PE and RME in the Senior Phase. These are a national requirement.





#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The Education Scotland Parent Zone website and the SQA website provide useful information for parents on Curriculum for Excellence and the new SQA qualifications.

The links below will lead you to a broad range of useful information including details about the new exam system and how pupils may progress through the Senior Phase.

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/index.asp

www.sqa.org.uk

www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46161.html

#### **FINALLY**

- We hope the information in this booklet, and via the links above, is helpful and that it clarifies any questions you may have about how the curriculum is changing.
- It is quite understandable that change can cause concern but please be assured that we will keep you informed and up to date with the important details about the new curriculum.
- It should also be reassuring to remember that the curriculum is changing as part of Scottish Government policy which local authorities are required to implement.
- All secondary schools in Aberdeenshire are changing and developing their curriculum in a similar way in accordance with Council policy and expectations.



