

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE INFORMATION BOOKLET



Introduction

This booklet is intended for parents/carers and pupils. It aims to provide key information about the national Curriculum for Excellence, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) exam structure and aspects of the curriculum in Portlethen Academy.

Curriculum for Excellence applies to all stages of education from 3-18 years. Portlethen Academy works within the guidelines and expectations of Education Scotland (the national education body) and Aberdeenshire Council Education, Education and Children's Services. Our curriculum is constantly under review and adapts to meet changes nationally or locally.

We aim to provide a curriculum that enables all our pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding and to be successful in life beyond school. We also aim to ensure our young people get the very best possible attainment, or grades, and skills so that they are competitive with pupils from other schools in the North East and beyond. In addition to National and Higher qualifications we provide a range of other experiences that will feature on young people's certificates and which will give them added "currency" in the job or training market. We do this by providing excellent opportunities to learn and achieve within a positive and creative school environment. Partnership and dialogue with parents, carers, pupils, staff and the wider community are very important to the school so please contact us if you have any questions.

Neil Morrison

Head Teacher

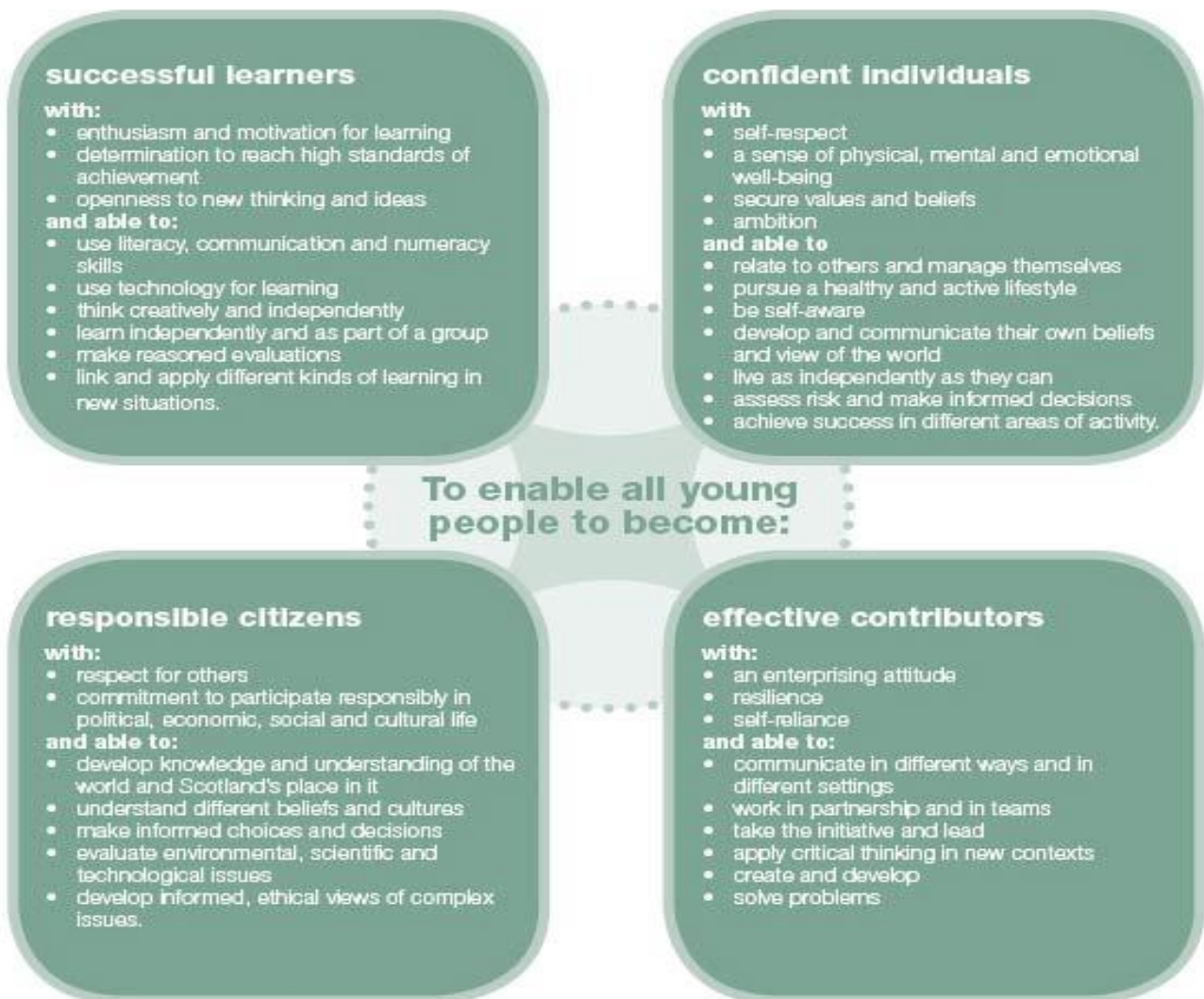
How is the Curriculum for Excellence organised?

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.



What is the Curriculum?

Curriculum for Excellence takes a broad view of the curriculum 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 Learning and Skills Development	There is much more 'joined up' learning between and across subjects in the curriculum with skills learned in one subject used and further reinforced or developed in other settings. This helps make learning more relevant and realistic. There is a strong emphasis on building skills for work, further learning and for life in general. A key aim is to help young people to be work ready and to have the confidence and skills for life after school as independent citizens.
Ethos and life of the school	Within the school a positive ethos and atmosphere supports learning in its widest sense and supports the development of the four capacities.
Opportunities for personal achievement	Both within the classroom and beyond we aim to provide opportunities which encourage challenge, satisfaction, motivation and resilience.



Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children's Services 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 curriculum.

The key points in this policy are –

- 1. A Broad General Education to the end of S3.**
- 2. The experiences that pupils have in the Broad General Education should support transition into the Senior Phase but should not pre-determine young people's options for qualifications from S4.**
- 3. All schools will run a combined S4-S6 Senior Phase**

This policy was designed to ensure consistency in the curriculum offered across all seventeen secondary schools in Aberdeenshire. As policy and practice has developed since the initial consultation Aberdeenshire has updated its policy to reflect changes in national advice. Particular areas that have developed as a result include Developing the Young Workforce, Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships, Skills and the Career Education Standards, wider certification of courses and college links.

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

The information on the following pages summarises how this Council policy shapes 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 S1-S3

What happens in the Broad General Education?

- Learning will take place across all eight curriculum areas from S1-S3

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

In S1 and S2 all pupils will follow a common course. Level 3 outcomes and experiences will be covered.

- In S3 pupils continue with Maths and English plus core subjects (Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies, Physical Education and Personal and Social Education). They also have the opportunity for some personalisation and choice by choosing 6 courses from the remaining curricular areas.
- PC Passport in S1 Business and ICT and Level 4 Religion, Belief and Values Award in RMPS

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
- We have a combined S4-6 Senior Phase subject choice process. This means that most courses will be open to pupils from any of the three-year groups with pupils in combined classes for many subjects
- The benefit of this arrangement is that it increases class viability and there is 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 or the equivalent e.g. extended work experience, college placement. Most classes will be multi-level with options for National 3, 4 or 5 depending on ability and application
- In S5 and S6 pupils will follow up to five SQA courses or the equivalent e.g. extended work experience, college placement, Foundation Apprenticeship
- 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 some circumstances pupils may be able to complete an additional National or Higher qualification in S4 eg Languages by a native speaker or Applications of Maths in addition to Mathematics



What are the Senior Phase 'core' Courses?

In Portlethen Academy our core courses include:

- In S4 all pupils will do English and Maths. Where pupils do not attain core units in Literacy and Numeracy these will form part of their curriculum on S5 and/or S6
- Pupils will also follow courses in Personal and Social Education, Physical Education and Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies in the Senior Phase. These are a national requirement.
- In RMPS pupils will be internally assessed on units
- In PSE we intend providing SQA N4 and N5 Mental Health and Wellbeing qualifications and we work towards the national Career Education Standards

Additionally, we provide a range of courses and opportunities that add to each pupil's folio of qualifications, which will appear on their certificates and, crucially, gives them experiences and skills that they can use in interviews and, practically, beyond school. These include:

- In PE in S5 and S6 pupils will have the opportunity to complete units in coaching
- Personal Finance
- National Progression Awards
- Extended Work Experience
- Leadership Courses and Experiences
- Enrichment Experiences developing skills and experiences
- Young Applicants in Schools Scotland – Open University Units

Daily Contact Time (DCT)

In addition to the formal curriculum all pupils have 15 mins before break every day with their tutor. DCT is a key part of our school and one of our main means of communication and consultation. It provides:

- daily contact between pupils and a single member of staff who can identify positives and concerns of a safeguarding nature (or other) and pass these to Guidance staff and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- a key communication time with the Daily Bulletin, letters, attendance/appointment notes, school presentations, reinforcement of ethos and expectations and passing of information about school activities e.g. the Sponsored Walk or Charity Events
- a time for assemblies that is separate from subject time
- a time to celebrate achievements and House activities
- consultation time for the Portlethen Academy Action Group (our pupil consultative group)
- a cross curricular element where school wide issues such as skills and inter disciplinary learning can be reinforced
- Senior staff use this time as part of self-evaluation when they consult with pupils on a variety of issues.

Beyond the Formal Subject Curriculum

In addition to the formal curriculum of subjects and a core we endeavor to provide a range of other experiences either during the school day or after school. These aim to provide young people with different experiences and opportunities that will add to their experiences and which can often provide a real spark of interest for the future. Many of these are regular experiences each year but others vary depending on opportunity and availability. They include:



- Get out of School Experiences (GOOSE Week for S1 and S2)
- Sports teams
- Northsound Challenge
- The Sponsored Walk
- Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) Club
- STEM in the Pipeline
- Fair Trade Group
- Art and Craft Clubs
- Music groups
- My World of Work Ambassadors
- Safe Drive, Stay Alive – Road Safety
- Mentors in Violence Prevention Training
- Lunchtime and After School Revision and catch up classes
- Work Experience for all pupils as they move to S4
- Gear Up to Go (transition project for prospective leavers)
- Career Ready Programme
- Portlethen Pupil Action Group (our pupil representative body)
- Frequent career related assemblies from all sectors of employment
- Mock Interviews

We encourage all young people to find activities and opportunities that suit them, and we are always open to suggestions and will try to facilitate these.

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 uses the SQA Exam system which is part of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

<https://scqf.org.uk/support/support-for-learners-parents/>



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 National Progression Awards, 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 SQA Exams

Many parents and carers will be familiar with the old SQA exam system that was replaced from 2013-14 and we have compared the C f E system with this below. 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 exams assessed?

This table summarises the assessment system that the SQA and schools use. Specific assessment details can be found for each course on the SQA website.

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

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.

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone>

www.sqa.org.uk

<https://scqf.org.uk/support/support-for-learners-parents/>

Additionally, we have a range of Parent and Pupil Leaflets available on our website.

<http://portlethenacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/>

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 the curriculum.
- If you wish further clarification or to discuss any aspects of the curriculum, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

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