



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Roinn an Fhoghlaim

Department of Education

Ag Amas air Adhartas - Aiming for Advancement

FLEXIBILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT APRIL 2004

FLEXIBILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

This policy on Curriculum Flexibility is an essential element of The Education Department's vision of "Aiming for Advancement".

Its purpose is to assist schools in developing and promoting flexibility by offering pupils a curriculum that meets their needs and allows them to achieve their potential, within an overall context that reflects the educational, economic and cultural environment.

CONTEXT

The policy is set in the context of key publications and reports which impact on the curriculum. These are:

- Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages (SCCC 1999)
- Organising the Secondary Curriculum :Principles into Practice (SCCC 1999)
- Achievement for All (HMI 1998)
- Achieving Success in S1-S2 (HMI 1998)
- Scottish Executive Circular 3/2001 : guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum
- Citizens of a Multilingual World (SE 2000)
- Better behaviour – Better Learning (SE 2001)
- Count us in :Achieving Inclusion in Scottish schools (HMIE 2002)
- Determined to Succeed: Enterprise in Education (SE 2003).
- Educating for Excellence : Choice and Opportunity (SE 2003)
- Flexibility in the Secondary Curriculum : Emerging Practice (LTS 2003)

The curriculum offered in schools must allow achievement of the outcomes identified in the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. This act lays a duty on education authorities to ensure that children and young people:

- Are confident, well-motivated and fully rounded;
- Are literate and numerate to a level at or above that of their peers in the rest of the world;
- Fully understand and are able to play their parts as citizens of a modern democratic society;
- Seize opportunities open to them regardless of their background;
- Have the skills, attitudes and competencies to work flexibly and to embrace change throughout their future lives.

These outcomes are incorporated in the National Priorities, which have been adopted by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as service objectives within the Education Department's Business Plan.

Service Objective 1 To raise standards of educational attainment in all schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy and to achieve better levels in national measures of attainment including examination results.

Service Objective 2 To support and develop the skills of teachers, self-discipline of pupils and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to learning and teaching.

Service Objective 3 To promote equality and help every pupil to benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser-used languages.

Service Objective 4 To work with parents to teach pupils respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.

Service Objective 4 To equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition.

The Education Department will work with schools in building on the established flexible approach to the curriculum, in order to implement national and local priorities, and to ensure a positive experience for all pupils.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles, related to educational gain, underpin the formulation of these guidelines:

- Responsiveness to needs
- Pupil needs at the centre
- Targeted provision
- Focus on achievement
- Opportunity for all
- Pre-vocational entitlement for all
- Enterprise in Education
- Language entitlement
- The bilingual dimension
- Partnerships
- Consultation
- Emphasis on outcomes.
- Continuity and progression

The inclusion of these principles in overall curriculum design is important in ensuring that the programmes of study offered to pupils are effective in delivering outcomes within an education system that actively promotes continuous improvement.

SECTOR/STAGE DESCRIPTIONS

PRE SCHOOL SECTOR

Pre-school education is required to follow a programme of work within the 3 – 5 curriculum framework.

The promotion of Gaelic, inclusion, health education, ICT, independence and citizenship is underpinned by an equal opportunity policy that allows for the promotion of a multi-cultural perspective.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Primary schools are required to follow programmes of work within the 5 curriculum areas, and their associated time allocations, as described in the guidelines for the 5-14 curriculum. These curriculum areas account for 80% of the available time, giving 20% flexibility which is used to meet local priorities and needs.

The Comhairle's Bilingual Policy, which aims to promote Gaelic at all levels, is implemented in schools in the Western Isles in the context of this flexibility.

Pupils in Gaelic Medium units will be taught through the medium of Gaelic for the first two years, with English introduced incrementally thereafter, leading to a fully bilingual approach in P7. Fuller details are available in the Bilingual Policy implementation guidelines.

The authority expects non-Gaelic medium pupils to have some experience of Gaelic throughout primary education. Teachers who are not fluent in Gaelic are afforded the opportunity to enhance their skills in Gaelic through the Gaelic Language in the Primary School initiative. Suitable materials are available to all schools.

French is generally introduced in schools at the P6-7 stage. The maintenance of the programme is very much dependent on availability of trained staff to deliver the programme. There may be instances where it is not possible to make this provision, either short or long-term. In terms of the recommendations of *Citizens of a Multilingual World*, the language entitlement to four years experience of one language for pupils between P6-S4 can be met by offering Gaelic, as both Gaelic and French are available in all secondary schools.

In addition to language input, schools can allocate any additional time to, for example:

- Raising levels of attainment in language and Mathematics;
- Developing ICT skills
- Promoting health education
- Promoting Enterprise in Education and citizenship

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

S1-2

Advice to schools on curriculum areas and time allocations is found in "Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages", which complements the 5-14 Guidelines. The 20% flexibility incorporated in curriculum design can be used to meet local priorities and needs.

This flexibility allows all secondary schools in the Western Isles to offer the study of 3 languages at the S1-2 stage. All schools are required to offer pupils English and Gaidhlig or Gaelic Learners and another language. French is

available in all schools. The staffing position in the two larger schools allows these schools to offer a choice between French/German or French/Latin. Schools should not offer a language provision which is not sustainable through S1-S6.

Schools which receive pupils who have been educated through the medium of Gaelic in Primary Schools should ensure that pupils have a bilingual experience in secondary school, in addition to the study of Gaidhlig as a language. The educational advantage in terms of Gaelic fluency in continuing to use Gaelic in a range of curricular contexts should be promoted at the transition stage.

In addition to language input, schools can allocate any additional time to, for example:

- Raising levels of attainment in language and Mathematics;
- Developing ICT skills
- Promoting health education
- Promoting enterprise in education and citizenship

Schools are invited to consider innovative ways to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, in line with the recommendations of Achieving Success at S1-2, provided the approach taken can be demonstrated to deliver the desired educational outcomes.

S3-4

Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages is also applicable to the structure of the curriculum at S3-S4. This structure is based on 8 curricular modes, together with assigned time allocations for these modes.

Schools should consult with individual pupils to negotiate curricular programmes appropriate to their level of progress, interests, and career aspirations. The curriculum offered should have due regard to the progression routes that are feasible beyond S4, in terms of staffing and accommodation implications.

The size and location of schools have an inevitable effect on the curriculum offered. Larger schools will be able to offer a wider choice of subjects than smaller schools.

National Qualifications

Schools are encouraged to provide the most appropriate courses for their pupils within the framework of national qualifications.

Schools can afford pupils the opportunity either to follow eight Standard Grade courses within the 8 modes, or to choose to meet the full range of modal expectations by taking Units at Intermediate 1, 2 or Higher in addition to seven Standard Grade courses. Access courses can be offered to pupils with special educational needs.

Secondary schools offer a minimum of two languages, in addition to English, at S3-4. Choice forms should be designed to allow all pupils to take at least one language in addition to English. All schools offer Gaelic and French.

Schools may replace Standard Grade courses with courses at Access, Intermediate 1 or 2 or Scottish Progression Awards if these are considered to offer a more appropriate provision for pupils, in some or all subjects.

Schools are free to consider an accelerated route to Standard Grade if it is deemed appropriate for pupils. Pupils who achieve Standard Grade in S3 can progress in S4 to the level beyond that achieved in S3.

Pre-Vocational education and Transition

In order to enhance the vocational experience of pupils, schools are encouraged to consider the Determined to Succeed pupil entitlement of work related learning (leading to a relevant qualification) as an alternative to one Standard Grade course or to the short course provision described above. The nature of such input will be dependent on what can be offered by the various sectors/providers in the locality of the school,, but may incorporate school based, workplace based, training centre/FE/HE based and distance learning provision

Schools will work with the Education Department in the planning and development of such provision.

S5-S6

The S5-6 curriculum, also based on Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages, offers pupils the opportunity to build on their achievements in the earlier years of secondary school. It is expected that individual programmes of study will be negotiated, within the national qualifications framework, with due regard to pupil progress, interests and career aspirations.

Pupils should follow courses consisting mainly of 5 subjects at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher or Advanced Higher level. The programmes for pupils should include provision for the pastoral dimension as relevant to this cohort.

The high staying on rate in schools makes it imperative for schools to review the range of options available to pupils. As with S3-4, the Determined to Succeed work related entitlement and some Further or Continuing Education input is recommended within the constraints of availability in the locality of the school, and following consultation with the Education Department.

The Heriot Watt University Scholar programme can have a significant impact on achievement at Higher and Advanced Higher. Schools are urged to allow pupils access to this source of high quality on-line learning materials for study in school or at home.

SPECIALIST ELEMENTS

- ACE

An alternative curriculum education is in place for pupils who have become disaffected with the school, and who, in the absence of this provision, would possibly require a residential mainland placement. This curriculum combines appropriate practical experience, combined with core subjects.

An intermediate approach is currently under discussion to cater for pupils who are showing signs of disaffection.

- Enterprise in Education

As a 'Pathfinder Authority' for Enterprise in Education, an Enterprise in Education plan for the Western Isles has been agreed with the Scottish Executive with the aim of contributing to all 5 National Priorities through planned progress towards:

- Enterprise provision for all pupils
- Work related learning provision for pupils S3 – S6
- Business engagement

- Inclusion

The Draft Inclusion Policy, if accepted, provides schools with the opportunity to work with others to develop learning support, vocational / enterprise flexibility and the management of resources to support flexibility in the curriculum based on individual need, or that of a group or area.

- Achievement

All schools work to support the achievement of young people across a wide range of cultural, music, sport and other activities.

Achievement activities include in-school, before school, after-school and holiday activities.

Together with inclusive education strategies, these activities provide a significant amount of flexibility for Headteachers to work with parents and others to extend the educational resources and provision available for all children, individual children or those who may have common interests or needs.

INTRODUCING CHANGE

Change may be initiated by the Education Department or by schools, in response to local and national priorities and initiatives or in relation to specific identified needs. Within schools The impetus for change can come from a department or from school management.

Change should only be introduced following consultation:

- between the school and the Education Department
- with school staff and pupils
- with parents.
- With any external providers or supporters.

There must be a clear rationale for change and proposals must incorporate details on:

- ◆ The desired outcomes, in terms of educational gain;
- ◆ Link with Department of Education Service Objectives

- ◆ Procedures for monitoring and evaluation;
- ◆ Resource implications;
- ◆ Any staff development required
- ◆ Future implications.

A proposal form for schools to use in presenting the case for change is provided.

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Roinn an Fhoghlaim

Department of Education

FLEXIBILITY IN THE CURRICULUM PROPOSAL

Guidance notes for completion

The Flexibility in the Curriculum Proposal Form should be used by schools when submitting proposals corresponding to the authority guidelines as outlined in the Department of Education Flexibility in the Curriculum Policy. Any proposals should be discussed with the school's Link Officer initially, before submission to the Department of Education for consideration and approval. The process of implementing change should form part of the school's development plan.

1. Proposal

The proposal should be clearly outlined and should indicate:

- The year group(s) involved.
- Projected numbers
- The curricular areas involved.
- Proposed providers (i.e. school, school/FE, FE, other)

2. Rationale and objectives

The reason for proposing change should be clearly stated and should include a statement on the outcomes expected by introducing change.

The guiding principles outlined in the policy document provide criteria which can be applied to the process of instigating discussion on change.

These guiding principles are firmly based on educational gain.

3. Link with Service Objectives.

The Department of Education Service Objectives, which mirror the National Priorities, are included in the Flexibility in the Curriculum policy. A clear link with these should be indicated.

5. Consultation

All relevant interested parties should be consulted at an early stage. Details of consultation must be included.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation strategies should reflect authority and school quality improvement procedures.

7. Resource implications

An accurate assessment of resource implications must be made. Change may affect accommodation, staffing allocation or have other resource requirements.

8. Training

An assessment of training needs must be made, together with proposals for addressing these needs.

9. Future implications

The future implications of the proposed change, in terms of additional phases, should be assessed.

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FLEXIBILITY IN THE CURRICULUM Proposal

School		
Year Group(s)	Projected numbers	Curricular area(s)
Providers		
Rationale	Outcomes	
Link with Service Objectives		
Details of consultation carried out or proposed		

Monitoring and Evaluation strategies			
Accommodation implications	Staffing Implications	Other resource requirements	
Training Needs		Meeting Training Needs	
Future Implications			

Approval Process			
	Comment	Signature	Date
Headteacher			
Link Officer			
Head of service			

Date of feedback to school _____

