



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

Senior Phase Strategy

Ambitious for the Borders

April 2015

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1. SCOPE

In October 2014 a Senior Phase Strategy group was established. Membership included representation from Schools, Borders College, Inclusion services, Skills Development Scotland, Opportunities for All, Employment Support services and Scottish Borders Council (Education Officer, Development Officer and ICT Manager).

The recommendations of the group are outlined in this paper and are intended to support staff in their understanding of the how the Senior Phase will be managed in Scottish Borders. It aims to provide clear expectations and parameters to those involved in the delivery of the Senior Phase. Fundamentally, there is an expectation that partners will work together to ensure that all young people are given the best opportunity to maximise their potential through raised ambition, increased opportunities and flexible routes.

2. PURPOSE

Curriculum for Excellence aims to raise attainment for **all** pupils. Scottish Government is equally committed to improving life chances through education and has clear expectations for schools for improving attainment.

There is an unacceptable gap in attainment and achievement between children from our most and least advantaged backgrounds and that gap is wider than in some comparable countries.

Raising Attainment for All

Schools are required to have the highest expectations of young people's attainment and to take into consideration the range of learner journeys which are in the best interests of young people.

Schools, through rigorous quality assurance and self-evaluation, need to ensure young people are receiving the high quality experience they deserve.

3. CONTEXT

The senior phase of a child's education is one of the most important, and potentially one of the most challenging. Schools are tasked with creating a curriculum that not only provides a meaningful learning experience which supports pupils in obtaining qualifications, but also enables them to develop emotionally, physically and socially as young adults. In short, the senior phase prepares pupils to make their own way in the world.

(Education Scotland, 2012)

3.1 National Context

This paper promotes the principle that all young people have an entitlement to a senior phase of education which:

- Provides specialisation, depth and rigour

- Prepares them well for achieving qualifications to the highest level of which they are capable of, and assists them in developing attributes and capabilities relating to the four capacities
- Continues to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work
- Continues to provide a range of activities which develop the four capacities
- Supports young people to achieve a sustained and positive destination

More recently, the report of the Commission for *Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (Education for All, 2014)* suggests schools should further develop their role in preparing young people for work through such areas as increased vocational training, enhanced opportunities for work experience and improved careers advice. The report also reinforces the importance of improved partnership working as a key to delivering these to learners.

3.2 Local Context

SBC has a duty to deliver a universal service that meets the needs of every young person and which ultimately leads to a sustained positive destination. At present, all schools deliver different models within the senior phase. In part this is driven by historic staffing, a lack of alternative pathways and finance as well as an absence of clear parameters.

With this in mind, and given the plethora of national guidance and legislation, there is a need to transform and improve our provision for our current and future learners.

4. PRINCIPLES

Taking account of the Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) principles, and the context of Scottish Borders we are committed to:

- Providing the best possible service for young people, whilst promoting the highest aspirations in each individual
- Developing a service that is both innovative today, and sustainable in the future
- Providing an inclusive and consistent experience for all young people regardless of location or ability
- Ensuring an engaging, ambitious and flexible service that meets the holistic need of the individual up to the age of 18.
- Working collaboratively and with partners to ensure a wide range of learning opportunities are available to young people
- Supporting individuals to continue to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, whilst also continuing to develop each of the four capacities
- Ensuring a parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes, and flexibility in terms of access and delivery
- Improving the life chances of young people in the Scottish Borders, with strong transitions throughout which lead to a positive and sustained destination

The assumption of inclusion is made throughout this paper, and the proposals within apply to all young people, including those with additional support needs. As with all aspects of the

curriculum, educationalists should, as appropriate, ensure equality of opportunity for all young people.

5. THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

5.1 Expectations of Broad General Education (BGE)

The Broad General Education (BGE) spans from P1 through to the end of S3. It is expected that schools will:

- Work cross-sector to ensure a progressive and challenging experience for all learners.
- Track pupil progress to ensure young people make the right choices for the Senior Phase
- Ensure Profiling is continuous and not just at P7 and S3. It should be created and owned by the learner and communicated to parents/carers on a regular basis.

5.2 The Challenge of S3

Education Scotland highlights the significance of S3 and therefore schools are tasked with ensuring the following:

- Learning in S3 provides appropriate challenge so that all young people are well prepared for moving into the Senior Phase.
- The S3 Curriculum is NOT dominated by the assessment standards for qualifications and practising for examinations.
- Young people are well informed about their progress. They are taking increasing responsibility for tracking their own progress and profiling their achievements. This will support decisions about subject choice at the end of S3.
- Young people continue to build on their prior achievements
- S3 courses provide in-depth learning and support higher order thinking
- Young people are given opportunities for personalisation and choice - Learning into fourth level is encouraged however it is recognised that for some consolidation of third level would be of greater benefit.
- Curriculum design in S3 continues, as far as possible, to allow study within the eight curricular areas and within the four contexts for learning.
- By the end of S3, young people have reached a level of attainment at a higher level of skills and understanding than before. This allows the progressive building of skills for lifelong learning
- Interdisciplinary learning is well planned with a clear purpose and providing young people with progression in their learning.
- For those young people with additional support needs, schools must ensure the curriculum provides opportunities to make progress towards their targets
- Built into Curriculum for Excellence is an entitlement to personal support. This support should enable young people to review their learning and plan for next steps
- Young people gain access to learning activities which meet their needs, have opportunities for personal achievement and are prepared for and supported through changes and choices.

5.3 Senior Phase Curriculum

The Senior Phase spans S4 – S6 (approx. ages 15 to 18 years) and provides opportunities for accreditation and qualifications. The Senior Phase follows the Broad General Education and should build on what young people have achieved and experienced up to the end of S3.

The Senior Phase must cater for all learners; most of whom will complete two or three years of the Senior Phase. Young people should be encouraged to remain at school and to engage in the range of opportunities available to them. However, targeted support and preparation should be given to those who exit at the end of S4. The curriculum should be designed in such a way as to ensure that all young people have the best chance of being prepared for life and work and so are best placed to maximise their potential. Achievement, as well as attainment, should be a strong feature of the Senior Phase experience. Schools are expected to review their curriculum annually to ensure it reflects the aptitudes and career aspirations of their young people, as well as a constantly changing jobs market.

In June 2014, HMIE released an updated ‘*Inspection Advice Note for 2014-15*’. In this document, clear expectations of the Senior Phase are outlined as follows:

- *The design of the Senior Phase curriculum enables young people to learn over variable time-frames (e.g. 1 or 2 year programmes) to meet learners’ needs, creates space for more in-depth learning and allows more time to be spent on challenging learning at higher levels. In the Senior Phase, young people can learn across the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework levels with flexibilities in relation to decisions about the level of qualification for which they are presented to encourage them to attain as highly as possible. This should involve partners as appropriate.*
- *Programmes of learning in the Senior Phase provide progression through opportunities for personal achievement with a continued focus on developing the skills and attributes of the four capacities.*
- *It enables them to extend and deepen their learning and continue to develop skills for learning, life and work, through qualifications and also through a range of opportunities for personal development (for example work experience, volunteering etc.).*

6. SQA COURSES & QUALIFICATIONS

6.1 National Qualifications

Across Scotland, schools vary in terms of qualifications - number of subjects, bypassing levels, presentation stages and duration of courses. Pleasingly, further and higher education providers are aware of such diversity across Scotland and publish admissions policies to support learners’ across the country.

Within Scottish Borders schools have the autonomy to make decisions based on the needs and interests of their community. The number of subjects which schools should offer will not be prescribed.

School timetablers must maintain strong links with other schools to maximise qualifications offered to young people. However schools must ensure that:

- An emphasis is placed on the qualifications, skills and attributes gained by the end of a young person's Senior Phase; schools need to ensure these lead to positive and sustained destinations for our young people, whether employment, Further or Higher Education.
- Qualifications are taken at the appropriate stage for the individual young person over the three years of the Senior Phase.
- Young people leave with a portfolio of qualifications demonstrating their skills and learning at the highest level they can.
- Courses do not have to take a year – units achieved, which may not lead to a full course award, are valuable. Units can be extended to suit the needs of the learner.
- Young people who leave at the end of S4 or Christmas of S5 are appropriately catered for in terms of qualifications and preparation for next steps
- Students are prepared for positive destinations and the world of work. When planning qualification options, consideration should be given to the local community and business context and where possible relevant qualifications should be offered.
- Bespoke senior phase models are designed to meet the needs of their young people in each school.
- Curriculum must be for all – flexible progression routes must be available
- S4 is not viewed in isolation or presentation in S4 seen as a 'given'.
- Focus is on the quality of planned end point qualifications, rather than how many qualifications can be picked up in any given single year.
- Learning starts a long time before the exam – schools need to encourage independence rather than reliance. Young people need to truly understand what they are learning rather than preparing through past papers only.
- Young people have enhanced opportunities for relevant work experience. Senior students should engage in progressive work experience related to their chosen career pathway.

6.2 Vocational Qualifications

Over recent years SQA has developed a range of courses that are more vocational in nature. These include Employability, Enterprise, Leadership, Personal development, Skills for Work, Certificate of Work Readiness, and National Progression Awards.

Skills for Work and Employability courses span from SCQF level 3 up to level 6 (Higher) and should not be restricted to pupils of lower academic ability.

Given that most young people will end up working at some point in their life, Schools are encouraged to offer courses aimed at developing transferable employability skills. These could be timetabled as 'core' alongside PE, RME and Personal Support.

6.3 Wider achievement

Schools should enrich young people's learning and develop skills and positive attitudes through engagement opportunities such as Duke of Edinburgh, Sports Leaders awards, volunteering and Saltire Awards.

Bearing in mind Building the Curriculum 4 and Education Scotland's increased expectations 2014-15, schools should also ensure that all young people experience enterprise during the Broad General and Senior Phase of their school career. This must go beyond traditional business and should include third sector and social enterprises, as well as ethics and commitment to sustainability.

Enterprise in the Senior Phase offers significant opportunities to develop wider achievement opportunities, as well as develop skills and knowledge. Schools need to be smarter in terms of Enterprise education and genuine partnership working should be established at the planning stage through to completion. For some Young people Enterprise may involve a three year project that spans the Senior Phase.

6.4 Inclusion

Across the authority there is a need for long-term planning for young people with additional support needs. This may include:

- 'Supported' work placements to develop awareness of the world of work, combined with employability skill development
- Where possible, schools should offer a greater range of National 1&2 qualifications, especially those relating to Employability and Life skills.
- Schools should develop a strategy that gives clear pathways for ASN students in the Senior Phase. It should offer clear progression in the acquisition of skills and experiences in order to support transition to post-school settings.

6.5 Courses and opportunities offered by partners

As well as courses delivered by school staff, some schools already engage with partners to deliver or support in the delivery of courses. Such partnership working allows schools to draw upon an expertise beyond that which exists within the school and so enhance the experience of young people. All schools, wherever possible, should develop such partnerships.

Where effective partnership delivery already exists, schools should ensure that partners are included in discussions and decisions about curriculum design and delivery.

7. FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO LEARNING

In the Senior Phase, schools and their partners now have flexibility to offer a range of pathways that meet the needs and raise the attainment levels of all learners – including pupils who might previously have become disengaged from education.

7.1 Activity Agreements

At present Activity Agreements happen post-school. The current model uses various partners and provision outside of formal education to encourage disengaged young people to re-engage with learning in a more achievable way. Young people work towards improving

Literacy and Numeracy, take part in group work and gain work experience through volunteering. They are supported by a Trusted Professional (Activity Agreement Support Worker) funded by Scottish Government for post-school provision.

To reduce the risk of negative or short-term destinations, Activity Agreements should be an option within the Senior Phase. It would allow the vulnerable learner to remain engaged in school whilst gaining skills for life beyond school.

Funding would need to be secured to employ a Trusted Professional who would manage an Activity Agreement team in each school. Schools would need to support Literacy, Numeracy and where required other qualifications such as Duke of Edinburgh, Saltire and SQA units.

7.2 Foundation Apprenticeships

Now is the time to more actively target Modern Apprenticeships towards supporting economic growth... where long term prospects of young apprentices are greatest.

Education Working for All!

As well as commitment from the school, there is emerging practice of STEM being delivered through Foundation Apprenticeships during the Senior Phase. Early adopters are reporting favourably on the impact on budding engineers of Employers working closely with College and School. It is hoped that Foundation Apprenticeships, not just STEM related, can be adopted by Scottish Borders by session 2016-17.

Further detail can be found at:

www.skilldevelopmentscotland.co.uk/.../foundation-apprenticeships

7.3 Work Readiness Awards

The awards are designed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), SQA and Employers for young people who are ready for their first experience of the world of work, but need some guided support.

7.3.1 Certificate of Work Readiness

The qualification is currently available through colleges and training providers working in partnership with employers but could be delivered by schools in partnership with employers. The young person will get a minimum of 190 hours of work experience with an employer and develop their skills with a tutor. The certificate is made up of five SQA units: Responsibilities of Employment, Dealing with work situations, Personal Development, Skills for Customer care including a customised work experience unit. However funding through SDS is not available to those in full-time education or work.

7.3.2 Introduction to Work Certificate

The Introduction to Work Certificate is becoming successful in schools across Scotland because it doesn't have the mandated 24 hours per week work experience but does have work experience as part of the core module.

A pilot should be established in one or more schools to test the delivery model. Once evaluated, the intention is to roll it out to all nine secondary schools.

Further information about the programmes can be found at either:
www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/.../provider-central-certificate-
www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64560.html

7.4 Raising the value and increasing the range of vocational pathways

Building the Curriculum 4 makes reference to the schools giving a greater prominence and a parity of esteem to vocational pathways. *Education Working for All!* identifies practical steps that schools and local authorities should be doing to develop skills for work to prepare young people for the workplace.

To break down traditional barriers between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ qualifications, schools must explicitly emphasise the vocational aspect of many academic course, most obviously STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths).

Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce sets a target that 60% of school leavers without a Higher in 2020 should have at least one ‘industry relevant qualification’. Clearly schools need to work with the Local authority DSYW group, partners and employers to ensure this target is planned for, and met.

Recognising and celebrating success is vital and schools need to ensure that this is inclusive and positive for all learners.

7.5 Encouraging growth in STEM subjects

There is a national drive to increase the uptake, range and gender balance of STEM subjects and to encourage young people into STEM related careers. Where possible, Schools should commit to this to support the future development of the national economy.

7.6 Responding to Local Employment Needs

The Senior Phase should aim to prepare young people for life beyond school. Whilst some young people go onto Further and Higher Education, some go directly into employment. Schools have a duty to work with partners to ensure school leavers exit with the skills needed for local employment and are confident in the work place. Nationally there are great examples of how this is being achieved through planned partnerships.

Locally, schools are working with organisations such as Borders Chamber of Commerce to try to develop young people’s understanding and skills. Borders Textile Training Group, are very keen to roll out a programme first developed in Elgin to develop the future workforce of the textile industry. A pilot involving three schools will run 2015-16 with a view to rolling out the concept to other schools and employers within Borders.

8. PARTNERSHIP WITH BORDERS COLLEGE

8.1 Current Provision

From August 2015, secondary schools and Borders College will align one column (two afternoons per week) to enable cross-region delivery of subjects. This will increase the choice available for all learners. Following discussion with individual schools Borders College has extended the range of options available for 2015-16. Pleasingly, SBC has established a process that enables schools to be given credit for attainment when the presenting centre is college or another school.

As well as offering a range of options through the Borders College Schools Academy provision, Borders College also work in conjunction with QMU, Edinburgh to facilitate the South East Scotland Academy Programme.

8.2 Commitment

Schools should continue to work together with college and other partners to maximise the range of courses and opportunities which can be made available to young people.

To ensure an effective curriculum partnership, Borders College Management will meet with school curriculum managers every December to agree plans for the following session.

School timetablers should maintain strong links with Borders College to ensure issues are resolved quickly.

At present transport, for some schools, is a barrier to attending College, in part because of limited public transport or distance from College. Transport to and from College is responsibility of Scottish Borders Council. It is hoped, that each school will have access to a minibus, through a bid to the Wood Foundation –this will create flexibility for schools.

If distance is the main barrier then schools should continue to negotiate individual timetables with the college and other providers.

8.3 Future opportunities

Borders College have ambitious plans for session 2016-17 but these are funding dependant.

9. ONLINE LEARNING

9.1 Distance learning provision

Online learning is growing in popularity. Pleasingly, the quality and range of courses continues to improve.

9.1.1 YASS

The Young Applicant in Schools Scheme (YASS) is run by Open University. A wide variety of courses are available each with a credit rating. The 30 credit modules are equivalent to an Advanced Higher. There is no fee for the 10, 15 and 30 credit modules. The 60 credit module incurs a fee of around £200 per module per student. There are a range of courses available

and there is an online tutor to support learners. However this model requires a high degree of motivation for independent study. Every school should be offering YASS.

9.1.2 SCHOLAR

This is an online resource developed by Heriot Watt University for learning in Maths, Sciences and languages. The resource is a useful addition to direct teaching and is not seen as a replacement. However, it provides useful learning during absence from school. The interactive aspects such as the chat rooms make learning more stimulating. SBC pay for Scholar each year and schools are asked to make best use of it by raising the profile via Parents nights, induction days, assemblies, subject specific tutorials and CPD with staff.

9.1.3 MOOCS

This is a massive online college offering thousands of free modules run by universities across the world. Unlike Scholar and YASS there is no online support tutor or forums.

9.2 Future development of Virtual Learning across Scottish Borders

Across Scottish Borders a large number of young people go onto further or higher education after leaving school. Increasingly FE and HE courses are part-delivered using online learning. Therefore schools have a role in developing independent learners. Across Scotland many authorities are exploring the concept of virtual learning to support Advanced Higher delivery but few have found a reliable system, and as yet nobody sees it as a replacement to teacher interaction.

Virtual learning has the potential to develop independent learners and to reduce the cost of Advanced Higher teaching. However, developing Virtual learning is a major piece of work and a culture change for Border schools. It will require a dedicated team to explore and develop robust ICT infrastructure requirements, pedagogical approaches, training requirements and support mechanisms.

10. BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

10.1 The Benefits

Employers are in a unique position to help give young people the inspiration, knowledge, skills and motivation they need to transition successfully from education to the workplace.

Education Working for All!

Employers are important partners and there are now more opportunities open to employers and schools to work directly with each other. The breadth and depth of skills, knowledge and experience that young people gain through the curriculum will give them more confidence to apply their learning and use their skills in real-life situations.

All schools already engage with a range of businesses in a range of ways to support:

- Work experience
- Work shadowing
- Workplace visits
- Expertise in curriculum development
- Enterprise education
- 'Real world' context
- Mentoring
- Internships
- Training programmes
- Seek their views
- Community relations
- Sponsorship

This benefits employers, by developing the skills and experience in young people that they need for their own businesses, and young people, by developing the skills they will need for the future jobs market.

In order to maximise the benefit of the partnership, it is important to ensure that both school and business are benefitting from the engagement.

10.2 A strategic approach

Schools should aspire to involve business representatives on school curriculum planning groups and self-evaluation /improvement planning processes.

10.3 Ensuring a positive impact

Schools need to be clear about the purpose of the partnership. The simplest measure is to ask what difference it is making to our young people, especially to their learning. All activities should be evaluated to measure impact.

11. DEVELOPING SCOTLAND'S YOUNG WORK FORCE

Scottish Government established an independent Commission, led by Sir Ian Wood, to look at developing Scotland's workforce following the recession. The final report *Education Working for All* was published on 3 June 2014 and set out 39 recommendations all of which built on Scottish Government's Economic strategy. At the heart is the drive to create a world class vocational education system to reduce unemployment by 2021. The full report can be viewed at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf>

11.1 Key recommendations

There are clear recommendations for schools, colleges, employers and organisations. These can be viewed at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0046/00466012.pdf>

In summary, schools need to ensure that:

Recommendation 1: Pathways start in the Senior Phase which leads to the delivery of industry recognised vocational qualifications alongside academic qualifications.

Recommendation 2: A more comprehensive standard for careers guidance involving employers

Recommendation 3: A modern standard should be established for the acceptable content and quality of work experience. Work experience should feature in INSIGHT and in School inspections.

For Schools and colleges:

Recommendation 6: Commitment to the enhancement of vocational education pathways.

Other recommendations include:

- *Prioritisation of Modern Apprenticeships*
- *A focus on STEM and encouraging gender balance across occupations*
- *Sustained support for young people at risk of disengaging and early intervention for those that have.*
- *Businesses supported to enter into 3-5 yrs. partnerships with schools*
- *Equality for All*

11.2 Making it happen

Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment strategy, 2014 sets out clear recommendations in relation to Schools, Colleges, Apprenticeships, Employers and Equality. There is a 7 year plan with a clear emphasis on measuring progress. Education Scotland has published a plan for 2014-15, and for 15-16. Scottish Government has announced funding to support the implementation - £12m for session 14-15 and £16.6m for 15-16.

Scottish Borders Council, ahead of many other authorities, took its first step in January when it launched DSYW to an audience representing schools, businesses, third sector and Council staff.

The targets outlined in *Education Working for All!* are ambitious, with clear timeframes for all stakeholders. Achieving some of the targets such as 20,000 Modern Apprenticeships by 2021 can only be achieved through partnership planning. The same can be said for the implementation of industry recognised vocational qualifications within the Senior Phase.

Local authorities must take the lead on developing a strategic plan to support schools, colleges and employers to implement the recommendations as per the published timescales. Local authorities are required to develop specific regional targets related to the local context.

11.3 Work Experience

The key message we have heard from young people is their need for significantly enhanced quality work experience while at school and college.

Sir Ian Wood, Education Working for All!

Work experience is not a new concept and has proved its worth in terms of developing skills for life and work. It is critical that schools provide a real experience of work whilst young people are still at school. However, this does not need to be whole cohorts at the same time- it is more important that it is relevant, meaningful and at an appropriate time.

Schools should work towards achieving the aspiration that all young people should experience a work placement. Special emphasis should be placed on those at risk of a negative destination, few qualifications, leaving at the end of S4.

The work load associated with work experience placements is challenging for schools. Coordinators are sometimes frustrated with delays because of health & safety checks. Given the increased expectations contained in *Developing Scotland's Workforce* and the recommendation of '*Education for All*' which emphasises the importance of high quality placements, the local authority should appoint a dedicated person to support schools in terms of health and safety legislation. Current good practice around work experience for Borders College students should also be explored.

There is a need to develop a more strategic approach to work experience; therefore school coordinators would be expected to meet twice yearly to plan with the local authority. Further guidance from Education Scotland in relation to the standard for work experience will need to be adopted from August 2015. Scottish Borders has been selected to be one of six authorities to pilot 'the Standard'.

12. SUPPORTING CAREER PATHWAYS

A recommendation of *Education Working for All* called for a more comprehensive standard for careers guidance. Education Scotland is currently developing this and once published it will give clear guidance for all partners involved in the delivery of world of work 3-18.

12.1 Partnership with Skills Development Scotland

Schools already work in partnership with Skills Development Scotland (SDS). There is room to develop the scope and consistency of input across schools.

12.2 Inputs from school staff

Pastoral staff, through PSE and/or Personal Support should be ensuring career-related inputs are being delivered. Schools should also ensure provision to develop pupils' wider employability skills through assemblies, careers fairs and enterprise related events.

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that skills for learning, life and work are developed throughout the Senior Phase.

13. THE SCOTTISH BORDERS STANDARD

Our aim is ensure our young people reach their full potential and move on to a positive and sustained destination of their choice. Gaining and sustaining employment can be challenging both locally and nationally. Therefore we have a duty to ensure young people leave with the skills and attitudes to allow them to gain employment, as well as the qualifications

Schools have different approaches for developing skills and personal achievement and growth. There would be merit in gathering good practice across Border schools and developing a Standard. Such a standard would outline the core entitlements that all young people would be guaranteed to receive during the senior phase. For example; a mock interview, development of a C.V., engagement in an enterprise activity, relevant work experience, Skills for Work qualification. Ideally, schools should use young people to support the delivery of key aspects.

14. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 Schools need to:

Session 2015-16

- Review their Broad General Education to ensure firm foundations are laid for the Senior Phase and opportunities for IDL, specialisation, personalisation and choice, especially in S3, are fully exploited
- Consider the learner journey and how best to prepare young people for post-school. This will require schools to look at qualification stages and courses differently.
- Ensure that there are appropriate courses and experiences for all learners, especially vulnerable learners.
- Engage with the pilot of the Careers Guidance and Work Experience Standard produced by Education Scotland, to deliver a progressive package for young people, involving partners to support young people into appropriate post-school destinations.
- Embrace emerging practice in terms of Foundation apprenticeships, work readiness certification, online learning and vocational delivery through partnership working and engage in pilot opportunities to test the model.
- Increase the opportunities for wider achievement and for recognising and celebrating success at whatever level.
- Ensure the delivery of Skills for Learning, Life and Work, including careers education and work placements. Every school should have a designated SMT member with responsibility for this.
- Review their links with businesses to ensure that partnerships are meaningful and are leading to improved outcomes for young people. These partners should be involved in improvement planning and priority setting processes with the school.
- Work with colleagues to agree a 'Standard' for all school leavers to achieve by session 2016-17
- Support the work of the VLE development team to support 'tests of change'.

- Continue to work with Borders College to ensure a joint curriculum that meets the needs of all learners in the Senior Phase.
- Develop a parity of esteem, where further education and employment are valued and valuable choices.

Session 2016-17

- Deliver the 'Borders Standard' for all school leavers
- Ensure by session 2016/17, all young people who plan to leave school at the end of S4 will experience a work placement. Priority should be given to those young people likely to leave without Highers.
- Prevent young people disengaging from education by offering flexible and alternative models which prepare them for employment such as activity agreements, foundation apprenticeships, part-time placements.
- Engage with primary colleagues to ensure the careers education is progressive and relevant at all stages.
- Implement SBC developed VLE programmes to support Senior Phase learning- details will emerge throughout 2015-16.
- Roll-out pilot programmes, as appropriate such Borders Textile Group, Foundation apprenticeships, Introduction to Work Certification.

Session 2017-18 onwards

- Work towards the recommendation (*Education Working for All!*) that 60% of school leavers not attaining Highers should leave school with an industry recognised qualification by 2020.

14.2 Scottish Borders Council need to:

- Establish a strategic group, involving schools, employers, SDS and other relevant organisation, to plan for implementing the recommendations of *Education Working for All!* This may be an existing group such as the Skills & Pathways group.
- Establish a strategic group to explore and develop virtual learning. Targeted funding is required to fund technical infrastructure, training and research.
- Secure funding for a minibus for each secondary school to support blended learning opportunities between schools and colleges.
- Provide a central resource to support schools to offer flexible work placements, Foundation apprenticeships and activity agreements throughout the Senior Phase.
- Provide resources to extend the delivery of skills for work experiences and qualifications.
- Monitor the improvement and equity of attainment in schools, especially those who are most disadvantaged. Investment in professional development of pedagogy to help improve attainment and reduce the attainment gap.
- Use evidence to challenge schools to improve outcomes for young people.

15. RISKS COMMENTARY

The Senior Phase Strategy outlines expectations for schools, colleges, employers and the local authority. It assumes that resources will be available to develop various aspects such as virtual learning and an enhanced work experience provision. Transport needs to be more readily available to facilitate blended learning opportunities between schools, colleges and employers.

Should funding not be available, then aspects of the Senior Phase Strategy are at risk of not being delivered. However, the change of mind-set required to deliver many of the aspects such as curriculum design, partnership working, and parity of esteem are not resource dependent.

The success of the Senior Phase Strategy is dependent on phasing the implementation appropriately.

16. CONCLUSION

This strategy aims to identify and build on best practice in our schools to ensure that all our young people, irrespective of background or ability, are provided with the very best supports to enable them to maximise their potential and find positive and sustained post-school destinations.

The Senior Phase Strategy group will continue to meet to ensure that the recommendations contained within this report become practice across all nine secondary schools and lead to improved outcomes for young people.

17. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Midlothian Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Stirling Council

Scotland should be the best place to learn. We want each child to enjoy an education that encourages them to be the best they can be and provides them with a full passport to future opportunity.
Raising Attainment for All, 2014