

## TEACHER PANEL

### ASSESSMENT OF THE BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION WITHIN CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

#### Introduction

1. This paper draws on a range of evidence<sup>1</sup> to provide an analysis of the Broad General Education (BGE) and invites views from Teacher Panel members on the impact of the BGE within Curriculum for Excellence.

#### Early Learning

##### What do we know?

2. Local authorities are currently rolling out a universal entitlement of 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) to all 3 and 4-year-olds, and to entitled 2-year olds (approximately 27% of the two-year old population). This significant expansion of ELC, almost doubling the current entitlement from 600 hours, brings with it both opportunities and challenges to the delivery of the BGE and early learning and childcare. Support is therefore being put in place to help practitioners adapt to the ELC expansion. This is particularly important as evidence tells us that high quality ELC (both before and within the BGE) can have a positive impact on educational outcomes.
3. A range of online professional learning modules is being currently developed by the Open University. Education Scotland is also leading on the development of modules on curriculum rationale and monitoring and tracking children's progress.
4. The Scottish Government recently launched a new national induction resource and a national directory of professional learning for the ELC sector. The induction resource supports newly appointed staff to begin thinking about areas of practice including play pedagogy, the role of the adult, observation and assessment and outdoor learning.
5. Work is currently under way to develop a new online programme of CLPL for the sector that includes a range of modules, for example: supporting the development and progression of children's early language and literacy; supporting parents to further engage in their children's development; and staff skills, knowledge and confidence in delivering learning in STEM subjects.
6. Education Scotland's QUISE report (see Annex A) noted in 2017:

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex A for details of sources of evidence.

- Inspectors found that most early learning and childcare settings were working well to provide experiences which supported children to be motivated, confident and engaged in their learning.
- Overall, staff were found to have responded positively to national guidance, including Curriculum for Excellence and Building the Ambition.
- Children have better opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through play and meaningful real-life contexts.
- Settings need to improve approaches to self-evaluation, including tracking and monitoring children's progress.

#### What are the current opportunities for improvement?

7. Improved understanding of child-led, play-based learning among ELC practitioners and school leadership teams who have responsibility for school nurseries could strengthen quality and consistency across the early level (including P1). Planning, including the effective use of assessment, to meet children's learning needs is crucial. Teachers need to plan to provide high quality experiences which enable children to achieve the CfE early level by the end of P1.
8. A series of evaluations of SNSAs were published in early summer. In response, the Scottish Government has committed to taking forward a range of activities to improve standardised assessments, strengthen the messaging around their use and enhance the professional learning opportunities available to practitioners. Following consultation with key stakeholders, the Scottish Government is shortly to publish a finalised improvement activity plan, along with a document highlighting the purpose of national standardised assessment in Scotland. The Scottish Government will continue to work closely with Education Scotland, local authorities, schools, teachers and other stakeholders to deliver the remaining actions.
9. The Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) expansion presents opportunities to strengthen transitions. Longer days in ELC offer greater opportunity for 4-year olds to spend some of their time learning and socialising alongside children in early primary school. We know this already happens in some schools that have an integrated nursery.

#### **Primary Stages**

##### What do we know?

10. Education Scotland's QUISE report (see Annex A) noted in 2017:

- Across primary schools, inspectors found that staff were increasingly skilled at using a broad range of learning and teaching approaches to enable children to

be more actively involved in their learning. As a result, children showed high levels of motivation and engagement.

- Schools have taken many positive steps to develop and improve the curriculum.
- These positive steps should be built upon to ensure the curriculum is reviewed and refreshed to meet the needs of all children and take sufficient account of the local context.
- Schools need to ensure that information about children's attainment and achievement is robust and used effectively to make improvements to children's learning.

#### What are the current opportunities for improvement?

11. In primary schools there can be a tendency to focus mainly on assessing children's progress in literacy and numeracy, and to a lesser extent aspects of health and wellbeing. Increasingly, primary schools should be assessing children's progress across all curriculum areas.
12. The move from primary to secondary has long been identified as a significant event in the learner journey. It has been associated with decreased motivation and engagement with school and a decline in attainment. It is unclear to what extent this occurs because of the transition process itself, or discontinuities in education (for example pedagogical differences, school environment changes, adolescent development).
13. The latest Achievement of CfE Level data shows that between 70%-80% of children across P1, P4 and P7 are achieving the expected level in numeracy, reading, writing and listening and talking. But we also know that more needs to be done to improve outcomes for all our children and young people. A gap in attainment between the most and least disadvantaged persists.

#### **S1 to S3**

#### What do we know?

14. Education Scotland's QUISE report (see Annex A) noted in 2017:

- Young people were generally well motivated to learn, achieve and succeed. Staff were clearly effective at creating a positive ethos which supported young people to enjoy good relationships with staff and their peers. Increasing steps were being taken by schools to develop partnerships with others, including with parents, universities, colleges and the local community, with a strongly positive impact. The quality of learning and teaching was commonly found to be too variable within schools. Many schools need to take more action to spread effective practice and improve consistency.

- Schools need to continue to work on assessing progress during the broad general education and to develop a better shared understanding of standards.
- Schools should continue to pay particular attention to reviewing young people’s experience in S3 to provide the culmination of the broad general education whilst also providing effective transition to the senior phase and courses leading to qualifications. By 2017, many schools were re-visiting the design of their S1 to S3 curriculum in the light of the experience they had gained of designing new senior phase programmes.
- Opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, work-based learning, creativity and personal achievements were not always being planned well enough to ensure that all young people can apply their learning and progress with sufficient pace and challenge.

What are the current opportunities for improvement?

15. We know from secondary school inspections that there can be a tendency to focus on national qualifications rather than assessment from S1 to S3, within a coherent, progressive BGE.
16. As a result, learners from S1 to S3 are not always receiving the support and challenge they require to make suitably brisk progress and well-informed choices. Therefore there is not always suitably robust information from assessment to ensure that learners follow the correct pathways into the senior phase. There is a continuing need for practitioners and networks to make greater use of curriculum area Benchmarks. Education Scotland is working with local authorities to support improvements in progression in learning from S1 to S3 and into the senior phase.
17. The advice to teachers from Building the Curriculum 3 (BtC3) is that young people should be secure in the relevant aspects of CfE Fourth level if they are to follow a course leading to National 5 or another learner pathway in S4 at SCQF level 5. It is important that all practitioners are supported in understanding CfE levels and therefore are providing sufficiently challenging learning opportunities to allow a smooth transition into the senior phase.
18. The ‘Achievement of CfE Levels’ data for fourth level achievement in particular, is less consistent than that for third level or the primary stages in the BGE phase. The table below provides further detail.

Percentage of pupils achieving expected CfE levels. 2017/18

Stage/Level	Reading	Writing	Listening & Talking	Literacy*	Numeracy
P1 – Early Level	81	78	87	75	85
P4 – First Level	77	72	85	69	76
P7 – Second Level	79	73	84	70	75

S3 – Third Level or better	90	89	91	87	89
S3 – Fourth Level	53	51	55	46	56

\* A pupil is reported to have achieved the expected level in Literacy if they have achieved the expected level in all three of the literacy organisers: reading, writing, listening and talking

### Key Points Across the BGE

19. The following extracts from the National Improvement Framework report (December 2018) include important evidence on areas relevant to successful delivery of the BGE.

**School improvement:** Almost all of the sample schools inspected by Education Scotland for the NIF in 2017/18 were evaluated as satisfactory or better on ‘learning, teaching and assessment’, and most were evaluated as being satisfactory or better on raising attainment and achievement. Approaches for assessing and monitoring children and young people’s progress across the broad general education are improving. Staff are using a broader range of assessment evidence to evaluate children and young people’s progress in their learning. However, there is more work to be done to ensure greater account is taken of assessment evidence when planning learning and teaching.

**School leadership:** Inspection evidence shows that most schools are satisfactory or better at leadership of change.

**Assessment of children’s progress:** The data being collected on children’s progress continues to help inform a shared understanding at local and national level on areas where focused action is required to reduce the gap in attainment and health and wellbeing between children and young people from the most and least deprived areas.

The evidence being gathered also confirms that teachers are becoming increasingly confident about making judgements on achievement of a CfE level, and the future use of national standardised assessments will help to support consistency in the approach to assessment within the broad general education.

Almost all of the sample schools inspected for the NIF by Education Scotland were evaluated as satisfactory or better in ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion; and latest statistics continue to show positive trends in the numbers of school leavers achieving qualifications, awards, and going on to positive destinations.

20. The International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) Report 2016-18 (see Annex A) recommended that the skills and attributes of the four capacities of CfE – successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors – should be developed and pursued alongside the important NIF

priorities. This issue was also highlighted by the OECD report (December 2015) on progress with the CfE.

21. Curriculum for Excellence is designed to enable the development of the four capacities through learning and teaching within all four contexts for learning and across the entire 3-18 learner journey. It is important therefore that practitioners are supported in understanding the impact of a high-quality BGE on the attainment of those capacities.
22. In response to a recommendation from the OECD, a sub-group of the Curriculum and Assessment Board has prepared a 'refreshed narrative' for CfE which is being made available this month and will be highlighted at the Scottish Learning Festival. This resource re-visits the initial Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) narrative and sets it within the current context. It supports the process of engaging with the core principles of CfE and the development of practices that are fit for purpose.
23. Taking curricular aims and translating them into practice is a continuous process. Getting this right is critical and the final section of the resource sets out key considerations, activities and ways of working to support the process of curriculum making.

### **Points for Discussion**

24. Teacher Panel members are invited to discuss the evidence and opportunities for improvement, and provide views on:
  - What is working well?
  - Are there gaps in our knowledge?
  - What are the key factors in improving learners' experiences, raising performance and closing the poverty-related attainment gap across the BGE?

**Education Scotland and Learning Directorate  
August 2019**

## **Annex A: sources of evidence**

- OECD report (December 2015)  
[link to OECD report](#)
- Education Scotland's Quality and Improvement in Scottish Education 2012-2016 (QUISE) (March 2017)  
[link to QUISE report](#)
- Report of the International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) (2018)  
[link to ICEA report](#)
- NIF report (December 2018)  
[link to NIF report](#)
- Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) papers on progression (June 2018) and assessment (June 2019)

Minutes, agenda and supporting papers for all CAB meetings can be found at this link:  
<https://www.gov.scot/groups/curriculum-and-assessment-board/>