

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education Operational Delivery
<b>DATE</b>	23 September 2021
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Organisation (OECD) on Curriculum for Excellence
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	OPE/21/187
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Rob Polkinghorne
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report aims to provide Elected Members with oversight of the published OECD report which was instructed by Scottish Government to help assess the impact of Curriculum for Excellence.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:-

- 2.1 note the contents of this report; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Education Officer to continue to keep Committee apprised of resultant changes in Scottish Government policy; and
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Education Officer to keep Committee updated of how changed national policies are being implemented locally.

### 3.0 Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence INTO THE FUTURE – An OECD Report

- 3.1.1 In 2020, Scottish Government invited the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Organisation (OECD) to assess the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in primary and secondary schools. The assessment was undertaken by the OECD Implementing Education Policies team, which conducts comparative analysis of education policy implementation and offers tailored support to help countries in the design and effective implementation of their education policies.
- 3.1.2 This report presents the findings of the reviewers based on their analysis of documentation, academic literature and experiences from other OECD countries; and on group interviews, school visits and events conducted online with stakeholders from across Scotland. One Aberdeen City Council secondary school contributed to the review.

### 3.2 The Findings

- 3.2.1 The OECD report was published on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 and is available in Appendix A. The review finds that Curriculum for Excellence continues to offer a vision and a philosophy of education widely supported and worth pursuing but highlights 12 recommendations for consideration.
- 3.2.2 The OECD team who conducted the review note that there are too many agencies/groups involved in shaping the curriculum and that their roles and remits are unclear. Reviewers recommend that a standalone agency for the curriculum be established and that this will require a review of the remits of current agencies such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Education Scotland. Current confusion around remits has resulted in key messages around the curriculum being lost as other key initiatives such as the National Improvement Framework and the work of Regional Improvement Collaboratives have been driven forward. OECD recommend that communications about the curriculum need to be stronger, clearer and more accessible and believe that national structures around the curriculum need to be simplified. Reviewers also note that stakeholders with responsibilities should have the capacity and resource to match their responsibilities and that duplication should be avoided.
- 3.2.3 OECD noted that the unclear remits around curriculum have resulted in a plethora of guidance on curriculum being available which are both overwhelming and unhelpful.
- 3.2.4 Assessment, and particularly assessment across the senior phase, features heavily in the report. The report notes that there is a need to fully implement Building the Curriculum 5 across the senior phase and identified the significant and unhelpful changes which occur from the mostly formative assessment in the Broad General Education to the traditional single stage and subject exams in the Senior Phase. The authors note that assessment practices in the senior phase constitute a, '**clash between 19<sup>th</sup> century assessments and a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum**'. This area is considered more fully in a working paper entitled 'Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective (Appendix B)'. The working paper provides some helpful additional context on why some national education systems continue to rely on a formal exam diet and suggests that teacher judgement should have more weighting as we move forward.
- 3.2.5 The OECD Report suggests that the senior phase should be considered fully to ensure that depth is realised through interdisciplinary and specialised disciplinary knowledge. Offering a core set of courses which are supplemented depending on the aspirations of young people may help better realise the vision of Curriculum for Excellence. Reviewers go on to state that this could see a range of changes in:
- pedagogical and assessment practices
  - collaboration and co-design with Further and Higher education
  - consideration of portfolio approaches and rubrics with flexible, formative and continuous assessment at the heart of the senior phase rather than exams
  - greater use of digital opportunities for feedback and feedforward
  - strengthened teacher judgement to build on recent progress in this area.
- 3.2.6 OECD propose that typical senior phase pathways which capitalise on a small number of compulsory courses could be defined nationally, this national work would enable schools to supplement with specialist courses and options. There is also a need to

more clearly define the knowledge required by learners and to carefully consider how best to ensure breadth and depth in learning.

- 3.2.7 The lack of an on-going evaluation strategy was highlighted as an area of considerable concern. Reviewers noted that the lack of any formal review has limited the ability of the curriculum to take account of emerging trends which would have been picked up through periodic review. The OECD go onto note that measures used to judge the impact of the education system should reflect the 4 capacities of Curriculum for Excellence and not only those of being a successful learner currently in place. Their view is that a more holistic and accurate evaluation framework will help the system better understand progress and identify next steps. The highly politicised nature of education was also seen as unhelpful at times and the reviewers noted that a clear evaluation strategy encompassing periodic reviews could help to guide change in a more manageable way.
- 3.2.8 The reviewers also noted that '**efforts to reduce the attainment gap will not be possible solely through schooling – we need coalitions with housing, welfare and health policy**' which raises further questions around how to measure and judge the system as we move forward. The work driven locally through the Community Planning Partnership seeks to reduce inequalities in education and employment opportunities, which are most acute for those families living under the grip of poverty. Through early intervention and prevention we aim to create conditions for prosperity and support future generations to be prepared and made ready for school, work and adulthood. The LOIP has a focus on supporting children and families living in poverty, care experienced children and young offenders/children of offenders because their levels of risk are very much higher than those of other children and young people of their age. This involves the education service working together with housing, communities, health, social work, welfare and justice to shape policy and affect change. Coalitions are already well established locally.
- 3.2.9 The OECD noted that despite extensive engagement being undertaken with stakeholders there is a lack of clarity around the extent to which consultations had informed final policy. They noted that consultation should draw on all levels of the system and that the feedback loop must be clearer. In general terms the OECD suggest less consultations but with a clearer feedback loop.
- 3.2.9 The need for research (at school and wider system level) was identified as necessary to help shape future innovations. OECD conclude that there should be no more prescriptions from above, changes should be practitioner led with horizontal collaboration so that those at classroom level can drive and shape change beyond their own department and school. The OECD noted that a 'top down' approach would not realise improvement.
- 3.2.11 The need to invest in curriculum capacity was highlighted in order to ensure that practitioners have the time they need to undertake school- based research and drive innovation. The OECD also noted the need to ensure adequate time for the recording of pupil progress and moderation of professional judgements.

## 3.2 Next steps

- 3.3.1 The Scottish Government has accepted all 12 recommendations in the report and has published how it intends to take them forward on the following link. [Curriculum for Excellence: Scottish Government response to OECD Review](#). Scottish Government has confirmed that pupils taking national qualifications this year and next will not be affected and will take decisions on how to progress work around assessment in the senior phase following publication of the working paper in Appendix B. The Scottish Government has confirmed a planned exam diet for 21/22 school session.
- 3.3.2 The Scottish Education Council will be reconvened. The Council will have a refreshed membership, including young people, and a renewed purpose to support the delivery of the OECD's recommendations.
- 3.3.3 A new Children and Young People's Education Council will also be created to ensure that the voices of those who are most affected by any changes in education are always heard in strategic discussions.
- 3.3.4 Professor Ken Muir CBE, who was until recently Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for Scotland, will lead work to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) with a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment. Further consideration of changes to the qualifications and assessment system will be heavily informed by the next OECD report, expected by the end of August. His remit is detailed in the following link. [Reform of the SQA and Education Scotland: advisor draft remit](#).
- 3.3.5 Professor Muir and an advisory panel will also look at reforms to Education Scotland, including removing the function of inspection from the agency.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Standards In Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 places an obligation on Local Authorities to secure improvement in all schools. The OECD report will change expectations of school staff and influence how the quality of schools is determined in the future.

#### 6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	School leaders and school staff being unprepared for changed expectations.	L	Culture of collaboration well established to help share the workload.
<b>Compliance</b>	Failure to deliver on any changed expectations.	L	Discussions regarding the OECD report with HTs and wider teams are planned – a collaborative approach to

			ensuring readiness will be taken.
<b>Operational</b>	Risk of employees feeling overwhelmed by change.	L	Support in place from the Local Authority Education Service and culture of collaboration already well established. Potential to simplify expectations.
<b>Financial</b>	N/A		
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk of reputational damage for school and service, especially if changes are not well communicated.	L	Information to be shared with parents and carers routinely.
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	N/A		

## 7. OUTCOMES

<b>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Children who have their learning and wellbeing needs well met are more able to contribute to a prosperous economy
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Children and young people who have their learning and wellbeing needs met are more likely to have fulfilling and more independent lives, as such this report closely aligns to all the children's stretch outcomes in the LOIP.

## 8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## **10. APPENDICES**

Appendix A - OECD Report.

Appendix B – OECD Working Paper

## **11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS**

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