

# leading change 2 learning from schools of ambition



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**[www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition)**

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## Foreword



Scotland's young people face a world that is changing rapidly. Our schools and all those involved in education are also changing so that they can help our young people develop the skills, knowledge and capacities needed for the challenges of the 21st century.

Curriculum for Excellence is helping schools to deliver that change. The experiences of schools on the Schools of Ambition Programme show that schools that embrace change in learning and teaching will be better placed to implement Curriculum for Excellence, and to provide support and challenge to enable pupils to grasp the opportunities offered. This "Leading Change" resource" includes a range of case studies and film clips that provide a flavour of the many lessons that have been learned about how schools successfully implement change. In particular, they highlight the importance of leadership in building a culture that welcomes change, developing the professional capacity of teachers and innovating to meet the needs of all learners.

I am confident that sharing these lessons across schools in Scotland will inspire others in leading and implementing change to continue raising standards in Scottish Education, improving knowledge and equipping young people with the skills to help them in future life. I would encourage you to read their accounts and follow up with the schools, ideas or activities that are of interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KB', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**KEITH BROWN**

MINISTER FOR SKILLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING

## Sharing the learning

Over the past three years, the Schools of Ambition programme has assisted over 50 Secondary schools to undertake initiatives for change and improvement appropriate to their local needs and circumstances. These initiatives were designed to improve the outcomes for all pupils, nurturing their talents, helping them adopt happy and healthy lifestyles, in short, providing them with the skills needed for learning life and work. As innovators and leaders of change, these schools exemplify the enthusiasm and creativity needed to achieve the ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence. A recent HMIE review of 16 of the schools found that *“the willingness to take risks and to look at things in a different way are skills which many staff have developed through their Schools of Ambition involvement and which are likely to be valuable in the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.”*<sup>1</sup>

As each school is different, with its own challenges and areas for development, changing the way learning is organised and delivered is most effective when it comes from within schools themselves. The best examples demonstrate a commitment to a whole school approach to change.

The aim of this resource is to share and reflect on some of the learning experienced by these schools as they undertook their journey of change. Whilst recognising that each school has different contexts they all experienced a range of similar challenges which we have grouped under the following headings;

- Building a culture that welcomes change,
- Developing the professional capacity of teachers,
- Innovating to meet the needs of all pupils

You can read about the first 21 schools that finished the programme in 2009 on the Scottish Government website.<sup>2</sup> This booklet provides short accounts from the remaining schools that completed their journey in March 2010. These accounts provide only a snapshot of some of the interventions undertaken, with the schools' transformation often much greater than the sum of innovations undertaken. A fuller account of all the schools experiences through their own “Telling the Story” portfolios can be accessed through the Schools of Ambition website,<sup>3</sup> and some are also illustrated in linked DVD footage. More detail on the process of change can be found in the Annual Research Reports<sup>4</sup>. A final research report summarising the process of change, and lessons learned from the programme will be available in October 2010. The schools welcome enquiries and are happy to share their learning and experiences. A full list of the schools and their contact details is provided in the Appendix.

1 <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/publications>

2 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/30095118/0>

3 <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/>

4 <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/about/schoolsofambitionresearch>



# 1. Building a culture that welcomes change

“I don’t have a monopoly of ideas of how to take the school forward, we really need to pull together all of the ideas, so we have encouraged leadership among staff and have many examples of staff leading projects (promoted staff, unpromoted staff) and in particular we have encouraged leadership among pupils. We really see that as a main strength in the school, giving pupils the opportunity to contribute to school improvement”.

**Headteacher, St Ninians High School**

Schools across Scotland are considering how they can organise to create school communities that provide the best teaching and learning experiences and outcomes for young people in the 21st Century. Examples from many of the Schools of Ambition demonstrate that the key driving force is effective and committed leadership that involves and empowers everyone in the school community, staff and pupils. Many schools are establishing more collaborative cultures which encourage distributed leadership, innovation and participation. Many are also looking to strengthen the involvement of parents with their schools and are making firmer connections with linked educational establishments and stronger partnerships within the wider community.

These themes are explored in the DVD that accompanies this document. Some of the examples on the DVD illustrating schools building cultures that welcome change include:

- **St Ninian’s High School** – Sharing “the Vision” through distributed leadership, facilitating pupil voice and school improvement through self-evaluation at whole school and project-specific levels.
- **Castle Douglas High School** – Reviewing the curriculum in response to local skills needs, and to recognise wider achievement.
- **Port Glasgow and St Stephen’s High School** – Joint school initiative to raise aspirations by developing leadership and learning capacity.
- **Renfrew High School** – Involving parents in transitions to support pupils’ well-being and learning.
- **St Paul’s High School** – Citizenship development through “In the Community Courses”, and working with the local Community Council.
- **Charleston Academy** – Pupil voice supported through pupil mentoring, pupil committees, and leading school productions.
- **Wallace Hall Academy** – Improving Teaching and Learning through school-led collaborative Action Research.

The following case studies in this section also provide an illustration of some aspects of the work of the schools which is told in more detail in their Telling The Story portfolios available on the Schools of Ambition website.

1. Renfrew High School – Creating a culture that embraces change
2. Port Glasgow and St Stephen's High Schools – Connecting to Inspire
3. Queensferry High School – Developing school culture and ethos
4. Kilsyth Academy – Leadership for life
5. Charleston Academy – Developing a community of ambition
6. Clackmannanshire schools – Creating a culture of respect





## Renfrew High School – Creating a culture that embraces change

“Having committed to becoming more innovative and creative in the way that we delivered the curriculum, we knew that we had to develop a culture that embraced and supported change and more importantly also initiated it”.

**Headteacher, Renfrew High School**

Renfrew High School aspired to transform the learning process in the school to ensure that pupils were equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st century. Staff and pupils believed that they were capable of reaching new heights and raising aspirations, but recognised that this required everyone to step out of comfort zones and do things differently’.

The planning process for the School of Ambition initiatives provided the springboard for developing a culture that embraced change. Staff, pupils and parents worked together to share and develop the vision and values for the kind of school they wanted. It was also agreed that any transformation had to be sustainable and capable of evolving and improving.

Two key themes, *Developing Renfrew High as a Learning Community* and *Empowerment and Leadership* have been instrumental in increasing the capacity to embrace change in the following ways:

- All School committees are now led by staff, and staff as matter of course share their practice at in-service day Learning Fairs, focusing on developing learning and teaching methodology. There is also a Leadership Academy for staff who wish to further develop their leadership and management skills.
- An S1 interdisciplinary course has been established with staff working between six departments to design and deliver a course implementing CfE experiences and outcomes. Additionally a rich task project involving staff from different departments developing cross curricular working has been piloted.
- Staff now work in partnership with associated primaries, delivering twilight courses to develop shared understanding of delivery of experiences and outcomes. Workshops are also held with parents to support them at transition and managing teenage behaviour.

All these changes have had a significant positive impact on the school. Staff expect to be involved in sharing and developing their practice, “...*We have been supported and encouraged to be ambitious and try new things, whilst being allowed to continue to do what we are good at and what we enjoy – teaching.*” **Staff member, Renfrew High School.**



Related DVD clips: Involving parents in transitions; Learning Fair; Interdisciplinary learning.

## Port Glasgow and St Stephens' High Schools – Connecting to Inspire

“Being part of the Connect leadership group is a great honour. I have met some great friends and it is an honour and a privilege to work with them all”

**S3 Pupil Leader, Port Glasgow High school**

Pupils from Port Glasgow and St Stephens High Schools have embarked on their own journey, forming a joint schools initiative, called the “Connect Leadership Group”. Four core beliefs underpin the group’s activities; Respect, Integrity, Inspiration and Perseverance”, and it is their hope that safer schools and community can be created as a result.



The Connect Leadership Group consists of 60 pupils who work together to improve the lives of others. They have pooled their time, energies and resources in the aim of creating sustainable improvements in their schools and wider community, which has high levels of unemployment and poverty, as well as the blight of gang culture and sectarianism.

Much of the planning work been completed in lengthy after-school meetings. The group is engaged in ‘connecting to inspire’ activities and at present has focused much of its time on ‘rippling’ their core beliefs outwards, towards the first year populations of both Schools. Such a rippling is possible because the group has set up and maintained its own Leadership Academy and tirelessly works towards the instilling of their core beliefs within every pupil, every year group, and every member of staff and individual in their wider community. Reflecting on the experience, an S3 pupil leader commented, *“realisation kicks in, you are one of many today that will try to teach over 20 first years what respect is”*.

A wide range of activities across the two schools have been initiated; including exercises to encourage personal reflection and trust, team building, physical challenges as well as inspirational site visits. The group has won awards for their activities, including Port Glasgow High School Service Award to the Community and the Princess Diana’s Certificate of Excellence in Achievement Award. *“We never set out to win awards, but it just goes to show that a little effort can go a long way.”* **S3 Pupil, Port Glasgow High School.**



See related DVD clips: Connect leadership; Working together to raise aspirations; Leadership Academies for teachers; Sports leaders.



## Queensferry High School – Developing school culture and ethos

“The common theme in all these varied initiatives is that they are all driven by people who work in the school and the community ... they are sustainable for as long as people are motivated to make the school a centre of excellence and ambition and where people feel a strong sense of ownership and belonging.”

**Headteacher, Queensferry High**



Queensferry High School has a long history and distinct traditions, but they were keen to develop a fresh school vision to make the school more outward looking, enterprising and responsive to the needs of pupils and community. A key element in Queensferry High School's transformational journey was to develop the school's ethos and culture.

A Culture and Ethos working group, consisting of staff, pupils, parents, community and local businesses was set up to develop identified areas for action. The group's aim was to create a school atmosphere of which students and parents would be proud. The Group consulted widely and this process itself proved to be critical in developing a positive ethos and commitment. A number of key areas for development were identified; transition from primary school, the school environment, pupil confidence, senior pupils' support and school communication.

Transition from primary school was enhanced in a number of ways including, developing a parent's handbook, residential trips for S1 students, and a greater number of visits from subject teachers to primaries. Environmental improvements included a range of small scale highly visible improvements such as re-flooring corridors and introducing digital display boards. Senior pupil responsibility was promoted through the election of prefects and heads of house, and a new inter-house competition initiative has allowed the formation of an active debating club.

Feedback from HMIE on the impact of these activities was very encouraging, *“The school has a very positive and improving ethos. Many young people participate in Pupil Councils ... Across all stages; young people are learning sound leadership skills”*. **HMIE school inspection, March 2009.**



See related DVD clips: Reconnecting with the community; Pupil leadership.

## Kilsyth Academy – Leadership for Life

“I learnt to listen to others, I passed lessons onto others. In class I am now able to keep others focused on the work.”

**S2, Kilsyth Academy Ambassador**

Kilsyth Academy wanted to realise the leadership potential of their pupils by providing a range of opportunities that would empower them to influence the future development of the school and local community. To change the dynamics, mechanisms are now in place to improve the student participation, the School House system has been refocused to develop pupil affiliation, and a pupil Leadership Academy has been established.

The Pupil Councils have been reconfigured to ensure broader pupil representation and influence. Three groups, covering S1/2, S3/4, and S5/6 are now led by School Captains, supported by staff sponsors. They are empowered to make decisions on behalf of the school in identified areas such as charity nomination, school activities and events. Pupils are also represented in a number of school committees, including the Eco Group, Health Committee and the House Committee.

Involvement in the Mark Scott<sup>5</sup> Leadership for Life Scheme has inspired a number of pupils to work with neighbouring schools in putting on entertainment for elderly citizens, and the renovation the playground of a nearby primary school. A number of pupils also represent the school at the North Lanarkshire Pupil Council and are involved in transition activities with associated primaries. A House Committee has been established to promote pupil affiliation and healthy rivalry, with Junior House Captains appointed to extend the leadership base. House badges and assemblies now take place along with a wide range of inter-house activities from across the whole of the curriculum.

After attending Columba 1400, the participating S2 and S3 pupils developed a proposal to lead a Kilsyth Ambassador's Leadership Academy for their peers in Auchengillan Outdoor Centre. This involved a series of outward bound activities and team working around agreed core values. In a subsequent survey, pupils listed a range of benefits, including; being more confident and organised, improved team working ability, and having more patience with others.



Pupils have raised funds for the Academy from proceeds of a very successful fashion show called “Trash Walk”. Here outfits were created from recycled materials, and modelled by the pupils themselves. The Academy and supporting events were so successful that they are now embedded in the annual school curriculum.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Scott was the victim of a sectarian murder. His parents set up a trust to fund leadership activities for young people and to combat sectarianism.

## Charleston Academy – Developing a community of ambition

“We have a motivational culture in Charleston, where everyone is busy doing different things ... everyone is taking on roles around the school ... everyone has a role ... everyone has an input to where Charleston is going”

**Teacher, Charleston High School**

One of Charleston Academy’s ambitions was to raise achievement by maximising the benefit from local sports facilities and by providing improved opportunities for health and wellbeing within the school. Charleston Academy also expressed a vision to, *“Build a school of ambition in a community of ambition”* by transforming the school into a fully integrated community learning facility.

As well as investing in a number of refurbishments the school established a number of links between local sports and arts providers, and health experts. For example, golf is now established in the S1 curriculum with links with the neighbouring Golf Club and part of the Highland Football Academy Trust (HFAT) facility is sited on the campus. The senior pupils also benefit from a health and well-being afternoon, and a Dropzone initiative has been established, where voluntary groups and health advisers meet the pupils informally at lunch times.



To promote community use of the campus, the management team, containing local community representatives, adopted a new constitution. All the improved school facilities are now available for community use, seven days a week. A facilities manager has been appointed, and the community stewards, cleaners and school janitors have been integrated into a single team, resulting in a strong team ethos.

There is evidence also that this team culture extends throughout the school, *“The school has developed a culture where most staff feel able and confident to take lead roles within and beyond the classroom”*. **Highland Council, QA Team, 2009.**

There has been a 10% rise in the use of the facilities as well as increased income from activities as diverse as wood turning, fly tying, African drumming and digital photography. *‘There’s definitely been a big increase in clubs and opportunities since I was in first year. I’m seeing parents and people in the community getting more involved too. It’s great!’*

**Sixth year student, Management committee member.** Overall, there is considerable satisfaction with the progress to date and there are plans to further enhance partnership activities with the Highland Football Academy Trust.



See related DVD clips: Forest Schools; Pupil voice; Scenario of the week; Triads.



## Clackmannanshire schools – Creating a Culture of respect

... “it has radically changed the way we deal with conflict in the school ... we react differently to conflict ... – our focus is on repairing the harm”

**SoA Coordinator, Alva Academy**



The three Clackmannanshire Secondary schools, Alva, Alloa, and Lornhill, are sited in an area of industrial decline. The three schools decided to have a shared Schools of Ambition proposal, focusing on improving relationships and raising pupils' self-confidence, through embedding Restorative Practices in all three schools.

Staff in each school received training in Restorative Practices, with the senior management teams being trained first to ensure commitment and modelling of the behaviour. Over time these practices have become embedded across the three schools. Key to the success of the culture change was involving pupils through a joint Peer Mediation Programme. All pupils from S2-S6 were invited to apply, with 80 selected across the three schools. Training began with an outward bound team-building experience, followed by a one-day peer mediation training course.

Peer Mediators receive requests for assistance through help boxes, email or direct referrals from Pupil Support teachers, and they decide jointly about the type of restorative intervention to be used, keeping the Pupil Support Teachers informed of activities and outcomes. Evaluation has shown that over 80% of peer mediation interventions have resolved conflicts at an early stage and prevented escalation.

The programme has boosted the confidence of Peer Mediators as well as benefiting the students involved in the conflict. *“It’s good to apologise and it is also good when someone apologises to you ...” S2 pupil, Alloa Academy.* *“I’m glad I am able to help people ... my mum will be so proud”.* **S4 Peer Mediator, Alva Academy.**

Restorative practices and the peer mediation programme have brought about a measurable change in culture in all three schools. In a teacher questionnaire at Lornhill, the number of teachers who felt there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils rose from 65% to 81%, and the positive impact of the interventions in Alloa and Alva Academy has been demonstrated in a yearly decrease in the number of punishment exercises and discipline referrals.

## 2. Developing the professional capacity of teachers

Education is always changing, so I have to change with it. Professional dialogue allows you to reflect and think, what can I learn? what can I make better?"

**Teacher, Brechin High School**

Scottish teachers have highly developed professional skills; however, the success of any major reform and change depends on all staff groups developing new knowledge, understanding and practice. International studies suggest that the quality of instruction is key to pupil success,<sup>6</sup> and have placed an increasing emphasis on developing the capacity both of existing staff and new entrants to the profession. Teachers need to be able to learn from best practices and have opportunities to allow them to share their expertise and experience more systematically.

Increasingly, schools are recognising that the insights and strategies which lead to improvement for learners are found within schools themselves. Many Schools of Ambition have developed in-house CPD practices, including showcasing, peer observation, cross-departmental working and the establishment of teacher learning communities. They have also developed networks between schools across local authorities, which allow teachers to reflect and support one another. *"Schools of Ambition have become very successful in forming productive partnerships with other schools. The formal and informal links which they have developed through the Schools of Ambition network and conferences led to close cooperation and effective sharing of good practice."* **HMIE Schools of Ambition report, p9.**

A number of examples of the schools' professional development activities are illustrated in the DVD accompanying this document. Some of these may already be familiar, but all have proved very effective for the schools concerned. Some of the examples illustrating the development of the professional capacity of teachers include:

- **Brechin High School** – Encouraging professional dialogue and collegiality through "Learning Rounds".
- **Charleston Academy** – Sharing best practice in individual classrooms through "TRIADS", featuring inter-disciplinary peer observation and professional discussions.
- **Newbattle High School** – Development of school learning community through peer observation, Match.com (matching teachers weakness and strengths), and twilight teacher showcases.
- **Charleston Academy** – Providing insights into the wider issues of school management to unpromoted teachers through a "Scenario of the Week".

6 OECD (2005), Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers – Final Report: Teachers matter.

- **Renfrew High School** – Promoting Teacher learning and confidence by staff sharing practice in the school “Learning Fair”.
- **St Machar Academy** – Curriculum development through staff identifying subject links on the “Learning wall”.
- **Sharing good practice events – St Pauls High School**, sharing their best practices with other schools.
- **Wallace Hall Academy** – Role and contribution of interdisciplinary Faculty Learning leaders.

The following case studies in this section also provide further illustrations of some of specific interventions the schools have undertaken to develop the professional capacity of their teachers.

1. **St Machar Academy** – Curriculum development through the Learning Wall.
2. **Charleston Academy** – Using TRIADS to improve teaching and learner engagement.
3. **The Nicolson Institute** – Improving teaching through Learning Journals.
4. **Brechin High School** – Improving teaching through Learning Rounds.
5. **Alford Academy** – Achieving sustainable innovation through Action Research.
6. **Taylor High School** – Using IT to promote interactive learning.
7. **Shared Practice events** – Inter-school professional development.





## St Machar Academy – Curriculum enrichment through the Learning Wall

“As well as the new interdisciplinary projects, one of the main outcomes has been the development of new courses, with others planned to create an alternate curriculum for 2010-2011”

**DHT teacher, St Machar Academy**

Staff at Machar Academy, inspired by St George's school in Edinburgh, decided to create a Learning Wall in order to develop wider understanding of the curriculum in S1 and S2, and help develop interdisciplinary links. This involved mapping the current curriculum, identifying the possible linkages between departments and displaying the outcomes to assist further development of cross-curricular activity.

Firstly all departments were asked to map their S1/2 curriculum by completing an audit detailing the topics covered and the skills associated with it, linked it to the 4 Curriculum for Excellence capacities. This allowed the school to develop a calendar for both S1 and S2. To develop interdisciplinary links, representatives from each department took part in a meeting where a 'speed dating' type of exercise took place. Staff paired up and were given five minutes to think of a link between respective subjects, and to consider other departments that also might join in. After five minutes staff moved on to another partner. This proved very effective and, within 40 minutes, around 40 possible links were identified.

The Learning Wall is displayed in the staffroom, with in-service days and whole staff meetings used to develop cross-curricular activity ideas. This has resulted in a wide range of interdisciplinary ideas being implemented in the school, including:

- English and RME – war and nuclear weapons for essay writing
- Maths and Science – numeracy skills
- Geography and Modern Studies – mapping
- Biology and Art – table mat competition
- Environmental Studies class in S3
- Geography and Science – weather/climate
- Pedometer project
- Design and Technology and Business Studies – making stands for computer use
- Business Studies and Drama – making menus
- English and Drama – creative writing in S1
- Art and Drama – props for Pantomime



See related DVD clips: CPD choice and variety; Learning wall; Learning from the pupils.

## Charleston Academy – Using TRIADS to improve teaching and learner engagement

“Most benefits come from seeing other departments in the school and getting staff talking about Learning and Teaching ... you can take all the best bits from everybody’s lessons so your lessons end up being a blend of good practice you see around the school”.

**Teacher, Charleston Academy**

One of the key aims of Charleston Academy’s Schools of Ambition Implementation Plan was to improve learner engagement. It was recognised that this depended on teachers who were self-motivated, committed to student learning and enthusiastic and that there needed to be consistency in pupils’ learning experiences.



A learning and teaching model emerged from a staff Learning and Teaching Research Group and from staff who attended Highland Council CPD courses. This was based on principles of: engagement, participation, dialogue and thinking. Consultations were also carried out with all staff to gauge interest in reflecting on their practice through professional discussions with colleagues.

Two classroom teachers developed a Teacher Researching, Innovating and Developing (TRIAD) model, which was initially based on three teachers sharing experiences and expertise across subject boundaries. This model provided a structured pathway from individual/department/whole school self-evaluation to peer observation, peer assessment, peer mentoring and a more collaborative working environment. In addition, teachers and learners collected evidence of learning through exercises, projects, assignments, tasks and assessments. At all times feedback was focused on improvement and allowing learners to develop the key skills of peer and self-assessment.

TRIAD groups were self-forming. Each TRIAD registered with the TRIAD co-ordinator, (a classroom teacher), and then agreed plans for classroom visits. Once the visits were over and feedback discussed, key points were recorded and fed into the wider project. The project, which is now in its second year, has engaged over 50 teachers and now involves more pairs than trios.

The centrality of this approach was noted in a local authority Quality Assurance visit. *‘Learning and teaching lies at the heart of the school’s improvement agenda... There are clear examples where staff see the need for improvement and plan and instigate change.’* (Highland Council QA Team October 2009).



See related DVD clips: Scenario of the week; Triads.



## The Nicolson Institute – Improving teaching through Learning Journals

“This was the best CPD I had all year because it was relevant to my classroom practice.”

**Staff Member, The Nicolson Institute**

Teachers in the Nicolson Institute are committed to sharing practice and have developed a number of ways of developing their professional learning. These have included discussion groups, sessions on use of blogging, interactive white boards and animation. Having developed a very good atmosphere of mutual learning, a Learning Journals Group was piloted.

Attendance, although voluntary, has been high, with between twenty and thirty staff at each session. Probationers were asked to attend three of the sessions as part of their in-house provision. All participants were encouraged to keep a journal of practice, which reflected upon what they had experienced, (for example, challenging behaviour, or difficulties in pupil understanding) and be prepared to share their reflections with their colleagues. Staff also submitted ideas for group discussion, including leadership, challenging behaviour, improving questioning and motivation.

The programme ran fortnightly at the end of the school day. Following refreshments, the session would begin with a stimulus for discussion, such as a video clip, a controversial statement, or an extract from a recently published document. In smaller groups of three or four, reflections on practice are discussed, with the best attended session entitled “Why be a PT?” featuring a panel of PTs reflecting on their experience and answering questions.

Feedback has been very positive. One teacher reflected that one of the most positive aspects of the sessions was the exchange of ideas, irrespective of years of experience. *“I remember a probationer teacher sitting with two DHTs, both of whom were praising an idea she had put forward for coping with a challenging pupil and resolving to try out this strategy”.* **Depute Head Teacher, The Nicolson Institute.**

Formal research was also undertaken which revealed that staff particularly appreciated the practice, *“I attended at first because I had to, but I continued to attend every session because I really learned from my colleagues, and enjoyed sharing experience with them.”*

**Probationer, The Nicolson Institute.**

The Local Authority recently commended the Learning Journals Group as an example of good practice in the school.



## Brechin High School – Improving teaching through Learning Rounds

“Education is always changing, so I have to change with it. If somebody observes me, I can learn from it ... it stops you from remaining static ... professional dialogue allows you to reflect and think, what can I change? What can I make better?”

**Teacher, Brechin High School**



Brechin High School set out to improve its teaching and learning methodologies. A Learning and Teaching group was set up, and fortnightly Learning Lunches were established where staff shared and learned from good practice on issues of pedagogy. Developing listening skills was adopted as an early focus, which involved a group of teachers teaching the same listening skill at

the same period on the same day. After building up mutual trust the group decided to go further and develop ways of supporting each other through peer observation, and their shared experience made it an ideal context in which to accept the Local Authority's invitation to take part in Authority-wide “Learning Rounds”.

Learning Rounds are an innovative professional learning process akin to doctors' rounds, but consisting of a group of teachers and other experts communally observing their colleagues in action as a stimulus for discussion and learning. Learning Rounds do not require the services of visiting experts, as teachers learn from other teachers. In Brechin, the observation group consists of teachers from Brechin HS, along with PTs from other Angus Secondaries, The Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration (SCSSA) and National CPD Team colleagues. The group is invited into the classrooms of cooperating staff to collect data on a specific focus chosen by the group themselves. Learning rounds of observation to date have included a focus on questioning techniques and on pace and challenge.

The learning from the process is twofold. Firstly the observed teacher receives objective, non-judgmental feedback about issues they are concerned about, “Learning is also generated by undertaking a joint enquiry, *“You actually learn more by observing than by being observed”*”. **Principal Teacher, Brechin High School**. The observation group gained confidence and developed the skills of focused observation, and non judgmental feedback. The feedback to the school has been useful to identify whole school focus for future classroom observation and high quality, sustainable improvements in the learning experiences of pupils. It has now become an integral part of Brechin's school improvement plan, as well as providing leadership opportunities for all staff.



See related DVD clips: Learning Rounds.

## Alford Academy – Achieving sustainable innovation through Action Research

“Action Research is a key feature in our innovations through which Alford Academy has succeeded in increasing its capacity for Quality Improvement”.

**Headteacher, Alford Academy**

Alford Academy chose to promote excellence through improvements in distributed leadership, learning and teaching activities, increased CPD opportunities and curriculum innovations. A key feature in ensuring sustainability and continuous improvement has been the school’s underpinning Action Research.

At the beginning of the Schools of Ambition programme, five individuals responsible for driving the changes formed an Action Planning Group led by a Research Coordinator. The group drew up the research agenda after examining the range of proposed innovations and consulting with colleagues. The group was guided throughout by their University research mentor. Additionally, two S2 pupils supported the group through data collection and analysis. As the research gained momentum the Research Coordinator advised on design of questionnaires, data collection and analysis of results.

A series of questionnaires were used to gather information and evaluate the effectiveness of, or attitudes to school initiatives and issues. These included:

- **Leadership** – staff CPD effectiveness, and attitudinal changes in S2s following attendance at Columba 1400.
- **Teaching and Learning** – effective use of Smartboards in the classroom
- **Partnership with parents** – evaluation of a parental support workshop for S5/S6 pupils and research into the prevalence in Cyberbullying.
- **21st Century curriculum** – analysis of outcomes from pupil’s ideas for change, and pupil feedback from the new S2 Enrichment course.

All the results were fed to the SMT through interim reports and as a result, the schools plan for change was altered. Changes ranged from the development of a new course on internet safety and Cyberbullying, the introduction of a wider range of pupil leadership activities, in-house training sessions in use of Smartboards, the inclusion of new annual events in the school calendar, Pupil Leadership Focus Days and Parental Study support workshops.

Action Research will continue to be undertaken in all of the school working groups, developing the school’s capacity for effective innovation.



See related DVD clip: Wallace Hall Academy – Action Research.



## Taylor High School – Using IT to promote interactive learning

“I love it. It helps you to learn when you see the most popular answer on the chart ... It's easier to remember because it is in a bar chart and because it's fun”.

**S4 Pupil, Taylor High**

Taylor High had a key aim of engaging more pupils in their learning through appropriate use of technology. As well as investing in ICT equipment, the school took steps to ensure that all teachers are proficient in using the equipment in a way that enhances pupil learning. A rolling programme of in-service training has taken place, involving Local



Authority training facilities, in-house instruction and training from software providers. There is now a high level of confidence among staff, with some teachers who rarely used ICT before, making systematic and creative use of the technology in teaching. As a result, interactive lessons are now a feature across the school with a wide range of educational software used, including Boardworks, Task Magic, Listos and Interactive Poetry.

Each department has also developed a bank of PowerPoint presentations which can easily be updated and varied; these have been further enhanced with the use of an integrated interactive response system. This software, along with hand held voting devices, allows for the creation of multiple choice questions. At appropriate points during the lesson pupils select responses to these questions, with answers converted into bar graphs. This not only ensures that pupils remain engaged in their learning, but that teachers can also immediately assess levels of understanding, and identifies areas of learning which need reinforcement. This has proved to be very popular with students.

Quizzes have now been developed for all S1/S2 Science courses, with teachers noticing a positive impact on learning and behaviour. The ICT department observed that S1 and S2 pupils retain knowledge better, and the Chemistry department noted a marked increase in Standard Grade Prelim results. Encouraged by this, the Modern Languages department is currently developing vocabulary quizzes for Standard Grade students. *“This is an excellent form of formative assessment, giving staff and pupils instant feedback on strengths and developmental needs”*. **Principal Teacher, Taylor High.**

As well as being embedded in the school curriculum, interactive voting technology is also now being used in pupil council consultations and assemblies.

## Shared Practice Events – Inter-school professional development

“This is probably one of the best forms of CPD ... the act of people getting together, people contributing...everybody just learns so much ... The teachers who are hosting the event are also able to get the benefits; it is a good chance to reflect ... why did I do this why was it successful?”

**DHT, St Paul's High School**

A wealth of research highlights that CPD is most effective where it is peer-led, collaborative and based on site (in school). Schools can also learn a great deal from each other, but a recent OECD report<sup>7</sup> points out that inter-school visits by teachers, are not often undertaken. As part of the Schools of Ambition networking activities, it was decided to promote this form of CPD by organising a series of afternoon events in four host schools.

**St Modans, St Pauls, Newbattle High** and **St Ninians High Schools** volunteered to host the events, drawing up an agenda of initiatives and practices that they would like to share. An invitation was circulated both to Schools of Ambition and neighbouring schools. Sessions lasted typically 2-3 hrs, with schools choosing different ways to present their initiatives, but with all engaging in a question and answer sessions and reflective discussion.

**St Modan's High School** shared its innovative “Period 7” with visiting staff. The school has greatly increased the range of learning experiences offered to pupils by restructuring the school week. The rationale and practical implications were outlined to the visiting teachers, with the school providing a tour showing pupils involved in a number of these activities. A similar format was used by **Newbattle High School** who shared the opportunities it offered its pupils through the ‘Peak Performance’ programme, an all-school activity where pupils select and engage in a range of activities, culminating in an end of year show. Again an introductory session was held with visiting teachers, followed by a visit to a live stage set where pupils were rehearsing for their school performance. **St Paul's High School** took a slightly different approach, structuring their event into ‘Learning Stations’ for different topics with visiting teachers hearing from both pupils and teachers. The school demonstrated their system for recording achievement, methods for improving parental involvement, and initiatives to improve personalisation and choice. **St Ninians High School** will showcase a range of practices including their Active Learning, and International Education.

All involved were enthusiastic about continuing the practice as an inexpensive and highly effective form of professional learning.



See related DVD clip: Shared practice events.

<sup>7</sup> “Creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from the OECD Teaching and Learning Survey” (2009). Retrieved from [www.oecd.org/edu/talis](http://www.oecd.org/edu/talis)

## Sharing Practice

“If you go to Headteachers’ meetings, you meet people briefly and you socialise, but this is actually engagement at quite a deep level. It seems to be a very good way of exchanging ideas between schools and different parts of the country, so between Aberdeen and Midlothian and Edinburgh City. Apart from all the Highland schools that we would normally link with, we are getting perspectives and ideas and a transfer of thinking that I think is actually quite powerful and quite profound.”

**Headteacher, Annual Research Report 2009, p34**

An easy and effective way of looking at ideas for Continuous Professional Development is by going to the Learning and Teaching Scotland website:

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/cpdscotland/cpdfind/index.asp>





### 3. Innovating to meet the needs of young people

“We went out with a questionnaire to all the employers and business people asking them what they needed from people leaving Castle Douglas High school. As a result of that we have adapted the curriculum, we have looked at the skill base in terms of Rural Skills, because that linked into Farming, Forestry and Horticulture, we looked at the Tourism sector and we have introduced Hospitality and IT and we looked at the Care sector, introducing Nursery and care provision”.

**Headteacher, Castle Douglas High School**

Curriculum for Excellence is about raising the standards of education for all our young people, providing opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and attributes for success. It challenges schools to think about the range of curriculum choices offered so that they increase pupil interest and confidence, and provide a curriculum which is tailored to pupil choices and employment opportunities.

Schools have to think also about how they can provide appropriate support and challenge to ensure young people achieve their potential and establish pathways towards a destination of choice.

Many of the Schools of Ambition adopted a range of innovative measures which covered improving pupils' learning capacity, increasing opportunities and pathways for success, developing inter-disciplinary learning programmes and increasing pupil engagement and motivation. Some of the measures adopted can be seen in the accompanying DVD to this document and include:

- **Charleston Academy** – Developing self esteem and learning capacity in vulnerable pupils through Forest Schools.
- **Brechin high School** – Delivering “Skills for Work” and “Construction Crafts” in partnership with local employers.
- **Castle Douglas High School** – Encouraging self-employment capability through S3 participation in “Enterprise for all” course.
- **Port Glasgow High school** – Encouraging leadership through Community Sports leadership course for S5s and S6s.
- **Wallace Hall Academy** – Partnership working with the Queensberry estate to develop Rural skills and use of outdoor classroom.
- **Renfrew High School** – Learning about culture and history through Interdisciplinary learning, Just Dance and I Renfrew.
- **St Machar Academy** – Learning about health and fitness through interdisciplinary learning, including lessons on nutrition and walking challenges.

- **St Pauls High School** – Rewarding pupils achievement by systematically cataloguing activities, achievements and future goals.
- **Hawick High School** – Encouraging confidence and motivation through Creative Fashion.
- **St Pauls High School** – Provision of personalisation and choice through elective of two non-academic topics undertaken throughout the year.

The following case studies in this section also provide further illustrations of some of specific interventions the schools have undertaken:

### ***1. Improving pupil learning capacity***

- **Port Glasgow High School** – Developing a community of learners.
- **Kirkcaldy High School** – Personal Learning planning.
- **Fraserburgh Academy** – Supporting pupils to become independent learners.

### ***2. Increasing opportunities and pathways for success***

- **Gracemount High School** – Building pathways to success.
- **Rothsay Academy** – Increasing opportunities for achievement.
- **Auchenharvie Academy** – Actively raising aspirations and expectations.
- **Lanark Learning Community** – Growing and GLOWing together.

### ***3. Interdisciplinary programmes***

- **Carrick Academy** – Fit to skip.
- **Orkney Schools** – Exploring community, culture and identity.
- **Renfrew High School** – Interdisciplinary learning.
- **St Machar Academy** – Paths to health.

### ***4. Increasing pupil engagement and motivation***

- **Kilsyth Academy** – Creative Arts in the Curriculum.
- **Kirkland High School** – Curricular development through the arts.
- **Dunbar Grammar** – School transformation through Creative Arts and Enterprise.



## 1. Improving pupil learning capacity

### Port Glasgow High School – Developing a Community of learners

“I have learned that with a positive attitude I can make a difference”

S2, pupil

Port Glasgow High School aspires to create a “Community of Learners”, who are active participants in their own learning and equipped with the knowledge and skills needed in the 21st Century. To this end, the school decided to develop the learning capacity of pupils, to invest resources in supporting staff skills, and to grow the learning links with associated primary schools.

To improve pupils’ learning capacity, the schools explicitly teach pupils a course on how to learn, called, “Learn to Learn”. All S1 and S2 pupils participate, and whilst it is too early to have hard evidence of improved attainment (since the first cohort is currently in S3), class visits reveal improved quality of teaching for effective learning, and high levels of learner engagement, as well as development and application of the learner attributes; Responsible, Reasoning, Reflective, Resilient, Resourceful. A recent survey of pupils participating in “Learn to Learn”, clearly demonstrated that pupils were aware of its objectives, *“to learn better, work with others and gain confidence”*, **S2 pupil**.

Port Glasgow High School’s teachers have also become part of this “Community of Learners”. A Principal Teacher of Learning and Teaching has been appointed and teacher in-service days have been transformed into Learning Conferences, whereby all staff play an active and interactive role. The School also runs in-house Leadership Academies for staff, with the effectiveness of this demonstrated by the rate of teacher promotion and progression.



Port Glasgow High School is extending its aspirations by building the learning capacity of pupils in P6 and P7 in partnership with two associated primary schools, through the “Building the Bridges” programme. This programme is designed not only to aid pupil transition and learning capacity but to promote positive attitudes to health and well-being through the development of a healthy learning lifestyle.

All this activity has not gone unnoticed, a recent HMIE inspection cited as a particular strength, *“the use of well-focused and agreed learning and teaching approaches across the school.”* **HMIE Inspection report, 2009.**



See related DVD clips: Leadership Academies for teachers; Sports leaders.

## Kirkcaldy High School – Personal learning planning

“Through the PLP working group and staff and pupils valuing the impact of the planner and truly believing in its influence on whole school improvement, this initiative is wholly sustainable”

**Headteacher, Kirkcaldy High School**

Kirkcaldy High School has changed its approaches to learning in the school to raise pupil attainment. It was felt that pupils needed to take more responsibility for and become more actively involved in their own learning. To develop this, pupils were supported to self-evaluate more effectively through the systematic introduction of Personal Learning Planning.

An extended pupil planner was introduced across S3-S6, which includes daily, weekly and termly tracking of learning intentions, to promote more consistent assessment practice. This approach allowed pupils to evaluate their own learning and focus on strategies for improvement in dialogue with their teachers. The pupils plan with staff, a shared calendar of target setting along with formative and summative reporting for each year group.

A Personal Learning Plan (PLP) Working Group planned and implemented the systematic support needed to get universal uptake of the approach. Teachers were brought on board through sharing the vision and methodology during in-service days, specifically how to use the planner to support Assessment is for Learning. The concept was “sold” to pupils through a series of assemblies and lessons (Social Education and Art). Rigorous monitoring was carried out to ensure the use of the planner by pupils, with letters sent to parents and awards and certificates for the “best” planners.



Pupil planners are now used consistently through-out the school, with positive feedback in questionnaires and focus groups from pupils, teachers and parents with groups reporting that it has helped pupils take their learning more seriously and that learning targets are clearer. *“Learning is something students do, not something done to students”* Alfie Kohn.<sup>8</sup> There has also been a notable rise in attainment in S4 this

year and it is likely that the Personal Learning Planning approach has been a contributing factor. By popular request, the Planner will be rolled out to all primaries next year.

<sup>8</sup> American author and lecturer who has explored a number of topics in education, parenting, and human behaviour.

## Fraserburgh Academy – Supporting pupils to become independent learners

“The use of the technique has also impacted on pupil behaviour, reducing the number of exclusions and behaviour referrals, as well as increasing positive referrals.”

**Deputy Head Teacher, Fraserburgh Academy**

Recognising that a number of pupils in Fraserburgh Academy were having difficulty learning, the school decided to try Feuerstein’s Mediated Learning Programme of Instrumental Enrichment<sup>9</sup> (I.E.). The purpose of the programme is to help pupils become independent learners by enhancing their cognitive skills through intensive training in learning techniques.



A number of staff were trained in the IE techniques and following encouraging results from a pilot exercise with 25 pupils from S1-S4, where pupils improved their grades, the techniques were introduced to all of the S1 pupils. These students participated in a series of lessons designed to teach them how to plan their work, search out solutions systematically and pay attention to the details of the task. During each lesson, key cognitive functions are explored and their use in solving problems demonstrated. The main impact of each lesson was the formation of a learning principle which the pupils would try to apply in all of their classes and bridging exercises where the pupils looked for examples of the effective use of the cognitive functions in all of their learning.

Pre- and post- course testing was undertaken using base-line test constructed from IE instruments, with measurable increase recorded in ability to think out solutions, rising from an average of 52% to 76%. The testing also showed the methodology to be effective in all age ranges. A Teacher researcher established also that the methodology appears to impact positively on pupils’ attainments in tests (particularly maths) and had a bigger impact on the lower attaining pupils. Feedback from the pupils themselves has also shown that they value the input, *“I know that it helps me to develop my cognitive ability and makes me think before I dive into my work”*, **S1 Pupil, Fraserburgh Academy.**

As a result of these encouraging outcomes, more teachers across the school have received training in the technique, and the IE course is now embedded into the S1 curriculum within a study skills and project course.

<sup>9</sup> Feuerstein’s programme of intervention, Instrumental Enrichment is based on theories which hypothesise that thinking skills can be taught and learned and that these skills are transferable and usable in all areas of life.

## 2. Increasing opportunities and pathways for success

### Gracemount High School – Building pathways to success

“We are confident we can support every young person with a curriculum which is tailored to their needs and effectively supports them towards their destination of choice.”

**Headteacher, Gracemount High School**

Gracemount High school recognised that standard curricular options did not always support the interests or abilities of all of the pupils in the school and therefore have developed a new curriculum approach called. *‘Building Pathways to Success’*. This provides; exciting new course options, a range of levels at which they can be pursued, and support to ensure learners follow appropriate and (personally) ambitious options. There are pathways to support pupils with academic and vocational goals and Alternative Pathways for pupils facing multiple barriers. Pupils who display particular talents are nurtured through Academies to promote relevance and coherence.

#### ***Academic and Vocational pathways***

Highly successful academic programmes have been developed in key subjects such as Maths, English and Modern Languages building on enhanced primary transition work, and accelerating progress through the first three years of secondary. As a result, attainment in these subjects is greatly strengthened. The school also has exciting vocational opportunities, including the JET (Jobs, Enterprise & Training) programme which incorporates a year long work placement and skills training in to the pupil’s curriculum and leading to a Skills for Work qualification. Students can also attend the local FE College for Automotive and Media courses or take Hairdressing, delivered by the FE College in the school salon.



#### ***Alternative pathways***

Alternative pathways support the most vulnerable learners. This begins with enhanced transition work with P7 students, through to support for seeking post school employment. There are wider achievement opportunities in most curricular areas, including the Forest Schools, Princes Trust XL programme and the Training for Life and Work programme. This has led to increased attendance, attainment, and confidence, with 100% of supported pupils achieving 5+ awards last session and going on to a positive destination.

#### ***The Academy approach***

The Dance Academy, as well as providing a dance pathway from primary to SQA qualifications during S3-6, has resulted in significant success in local and national dance competitions. An SFA Football Academy has also been piloted with 16 S1/S2 pupils, which because of the very positive impact on school attendance and attitude will be offered from S1-3 next session.



## Rothesay Academy – Increasing opportunities for achievement

The pupils of Rothesay Academy are voting with their feet, we are seeing a significant drop in our absence percentages, exclusions and behaviour demerits ... we believe we have significantly changed how Rothesay Academy Pupils perceive their school.

**SoA Coordinator, Rothesay Academy**

Rothesay Academy has ambitious aims. The main thrust of their transformational plans is to increase opportunities for achievement and raise the aspirations of their pupils. With this in mind, the school has expanded its existing strengths of sports and music, introduced a more a flexible curriculum, and increased pupil support.

Teamwork and confidence have been boosted by the formation of the Rothesay Academy Football Club, which now competes in a mainland Saturday League. The football team has given a sense of identity for many pupils, with some of the boys also delivering coaching sessions to local primary schools. This has all helped present a positive view of the school in the community, and has encouraged a number of boys at risk of becoming non attendees stay on beyond 16 to gain valuable qualifications. *"It has developed a sense of self-belief in him (my son) ... and has given many of the children a focus to be engaged actively in school life."* **Parent, Football team member.**

The island also has highly acclaimed bands both concert and swing. The intention was to increase the number of pupils involved in these bands by enhancing musical equipment and introducing drum and vocal 'master classes', keeping costs down through use of group lessons. This has been of immense benefit to a number of students, helping those with confidence issues find their identity and producing a knock-on positive effect with the rest of their schooling.

The appointment of a youth worker had a tremendous effect on the aspirations of a number of pupils, so much so that she now has a permanent contract. Not only has she provided one-to-one support for vulnerable pupils, but also delivers an XL course designed to develop skills in citizenship and enterprise. The curriculum has been further expanded through Skills for Work courses in child care and hairdressing, as well as enrolment of pupils into Sports Leader UK. A Breakfast club also gives the opportunity for pupils (many of whom can't attend after school due to work or caring responsibilities) to engage in sports.



## Auchinharvie Academy – Actively rising aspirations and expectations

It was great and I couldn't ask for more ... it was much better than expected and it has really set me up for my exams"

**S5 pupils, Auchinharvie Academy**



Auchinharvie Academy made raising the expectations and aspirations of the school community a major priority. A number of initiatives are on going with the common aim of improving pupils' achievements and attainment. These include a summer sports academy, a Saturday morning sports club, Easter school, pupil mentoring, and an attendance and late-coming improvement drive. A particularly effective initiative aimed at senior pupils has been the "Aspirations Weekend".

The aim of the weekend was to inspire, improve the confidence and encourage self belief in all pupils and accompanying teachers. A further aim was to ensure all pupils felt valued and understood the importance of their contribution to a successful school community. After being addressed by the Head Teacher on reaching your potential and meeting life goals, interested pupils and staff were asked to write a statement stating why they should be selected, and as a result, 25 pupils, two teachers and the Head Teacher travelled to Arran for an "Aspirations Weekend".

The programme for the weekend was written jointly by the centre manager and the school management team, and included a series of outdoor challenges, led by centre staff, along with classroom based workshops led by the Head Teacher. Team working and self reflection were key elements in the experience. Since returning from the weekend, all pupils meet regularly with an allocated mentor, with the pupils and teachers also meeting as a group to discuss progress and challenges. It is anticipated that the intervention will, *"make a significant contribution to improved attainment in the senior school this year"* **Head Teacher, Auchinharvie Academy.**

As a result of this successful weekend, the school is continuing its relationship with Arran Outdoor Centre and has embedded a number of new initiatives in the school curriculum. A second "Aspirations Weekend" for the new S5 has been organised and a programme has been put in place for a week long Pupil Leadership Academy for S3. In addition, Arran Outdoor Centre and the Head Teacher will deliver a leadership weekend to teachers throughout the authority.



Lanark Learning Community – Growing and GLOWing together

“Having realised how enthusiastic the children were I decided to attend further training on GLOW on how I could enhance learning and teaching across the curriculum”

Teacher, Carmichael Primary

The Lanark Learning Community, sited over a substantial rural area consists of Lanark Grammar School, 12 associated primary schools, and one nursery school. The primary schools vary in size from 235 to less than 30, and as public transport in the area is very limited, there are practical difficulties in supporting secondary school transition. Involvement in extra-school activities is also limited and lack of local employment opportunities has impacted on pupil ambition. One of the main aims of the Learning Community is to create a culture of shared learning and ambition to improve pupil engagement, broadening pupil horizons and outcomes.



A key element in linking the schools has been the formation of a shared ICT network for learning, using GLOW. Two GLOW sites have been established, one exclusively for staff, and one for staff and pupils, with individual pages set up for stages P5-P7 as well as Lanark Grammar. CPD support was

provided locally to staff and pupils to develop skills and confidence in using GLOW, with staff and pupil groups now able to post notices, documents, school projects etc. These are now used as a means of communication, celebrating achievement and cross-sector collaborative working. Additional pages on the staff site include the following; Careers Team, Assessment is for Learning, Rich Tasks, Transition Rich Tasks, and ICT team.

Monthly Maths Challenges have been seminal in establishing involvement across the primary schools, Comments posted showed not only that pupils were keen to participate, *"I enjoy doing the maths challenges because I can do the maths in a fun way"*. **P7 Pupil, Carstairs Primary**, but they also stimulated teacher involvement in the network.

Topic tasks have now been set up across the schools, with information on appropriate web-links and resources, and pupils are now accessing GLOW for homework tasks, uploading documents to their own folders. The inclusion of a folder for parents' comments has increased parental involvement in their child's learning.

GLOW is now being used in all schools, with targets for use in enhancing learning and teaching incorporated in every establishment's Improvement plan, with new ideas for future use developing all the time.

### 3. Interdisciplinary programmes

#### Carrick Academy – Fit to skip

“The project is definitely helping to support the pupils' attitudes to foods, they are more knowledgeable about the nutritional value of food and are prepared to try a much wider range of (healthy) foods than before”

**PT Home Economics, Carrick Academy**

As a health promoting school, Carrick Academy recognised the need to address the fitness levels and eating habits of pupils in a way that would lead to a sustainable change in lifestyle. After much discussion, staff in Home Economics, English and Design Technology as well as Physical Education joined forces to deliver a cross-curricular project aimed at S2s, “Fit to Skip”.

Each department looked at aspects of physical activity, food and health, and jointly mapped experiences and outcomes to be delivered, including; partnerships, teamwork, citizenship, enterprise, health and well-being, pupil engagement, literacy and numeracy.



In Home Economics pupils investigated healthy eating, including the types and energy requirements of food needed prior to a sporting activity. Pupils then, as part of a class competition judged by a local chef, cooked a pasta dish to meet the energy requirement. The winner was invited to support a food demonstration at a local hotel, with their winning dish being put on the menu.

In Physical Education pupils learned to skip, and then calculated how much exercise they would have to do to use the energy value of the meal cooked in Home Economics. They also learned training principles, including the use of heart-rate monitors to keep them in appropriate training zones. Supported by three local boxers, pupils were then challenged to a 30 minute sponsored skip to raise money for the British Heart Foundation.

The English and Design Technologies departments worked together in promotion and advertising. Pupils gained an understanding of the industry by deconstructing literature and advertising on healthy eating and lifestyles, producing their own advert and information leaflet to encourage good practice. In English they also compiled survey questions to find out more on eating and exercise habits of young people.

In addition to the obvious health benefits derived from the project, it has successfully delivered the planned outcomes and experiences, especially leadership, communication and teamwork skills. “Fit to Skip” is now firmly embedded in the S2 curriculum.

## Orkney Schools – Exploring community, culture and identity

“The Orkney School Metasaga is a fantastic tool for helping pupils achieve the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, as it encourages the young people involved to explore their local culture and understand their place in the wider world, while developing key skills such as team work and leadership”,

**Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and early Years,  
Orkney Islands Council press release July 2009**

Six Orkney secondary schools working in partnership to develop learning and teaching and leadership skills in Orkney’s secondary schools have come up with a highly innovative way to take this forward, through the use of Metasagas.<sup>10</sup>

A Metasaga is a journey through the cultural heritage and physical landscape and makes learning relevant and authentic by learners exploring their own environment drawing from their own culture and telling their own story. Metasagas allow people to reflect upon important life issues, and take forward the way people think about their own life and learning. “A Metasaga is like a philosophical treasure hunt. It allows you to explore an area, but at the same time it helps you discover yourself”, **Sanday Junior High School, Metasaga publication.**

Following a Schools of Ambition staff leadership seminar where participants took part in a Metasaga experience, it was decided to embed this experiential process in all six Orkney schools. It was agreed that each school would explore their surrounding catchment area, identifying key stopping points of cultural or historic interest. Pupils researched each site and developed a series of interpretive questions, designed to encourage participants to reflect on their own vision, values, drivers and motivations. After trialling their Metasagas with a neighbouring school, they posted their responses on-line.

*“Our visit to Hoy was fantastic. We tried out their Metasagas at the Dwarfie Stane and Rackwick, .... Trying out their Metasagas made us think differently about our own on Sanday and we got lots of different ideas.”* **Secondary school pupil.**



The Enhancing Skills Group then collectively created a seventh Orkney wide Metasaga, to open up the schools’ Metasagas to wider audiences and island visitors. Pupils from all six island schools have produced booklets and tours around their areas in a common format. The publications will be on sale, and staff and pupils will lead Metasaga tours from the Kirkwall and Stromness Visit Scotland branches in April 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Inspired by the work of Leif Jossefson (Metafari), <http://metafari.blogspot.com/search/label/Metasaga>

## Renfrew High school – Interdisciplinary learning

“I have developed a much closer working relationship with other departments, have experienced different ways of delivering lessons and have learned a variety of new skills”.

**Teacher, Renfrew High School**

Renfrew High School has developed two distinct interdisciplinary programmes, **iRenfrew** and **Just Dance!** The underlying rationale is that by providing personalisation and choice in the learning paths and activities, and through pupil teamwork in devising, designing and delivering the final product, the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence will be developed. Both of these programmes run concurrently for approximately 20 weeks, working with half of the year group, and then swapping over in the spring term.



**iRenfrew** helps the S1 learners to explore their cultural heritage through Social Subjects, Information Technology and Art. The first pupil-group has been involved in researching specific landmarks in Renfrew. They have taken photographs and oral histories from relatives and neighbours presenting them on PowerPoint to fellow-pupils. *“I’ve been interviewing family and friends about Renfrew. I have found out so many things I didn’t know!”* **S1 Pupil, Renfrew High.** In Art, the pupils have been creating a set for an animated section on the film and the second group will be using the research to create a film about the development of Renfrew through their own eyes. Pupils

are assessed on their presentations, and animations as well as a scrapbook containing evidence of their personal research.

**Just Dance!** aims to introduce dance to all of the S1, but to extend the understanding through an exploration of the cultures and traditions behind the dance style. This is done through a series of workshops, delivered in PE, Drama and English, supported by home learning/research. All pupils work towards an end product, a show called Just Dance! and can choose to be dancers, part of the drama team, publicity, backstage work or sound and lighting. *“I liked doing the dances ... also that we got to choose what we did”.* **S1 Pupil, Renfrew High.** All pupils have been formally tested in English through a written piece, and some have had a talk assessment based on their group work. There is also a homework assignment in drama, and ongoing formative assessment of skills in PE.

Both projects are growing and developing, with teachers not only reporting high levels of pupil engagement, but significant professional development also.



See related DVD clips: Interdisciplinary learning; Learning Fair; Pupil creativity.

## St Machar Academy – Paths to health

“The S1 Walking project was particularly valuable as it allowed us to raise health issues with pupils and staff”

**Staff member, St Machar Academy**

“Healthy minds in healthy bodies” is the theme at St Machar Academy. To improve attainment and pupil engagement the school introduced a series of wide-ranging initiatives to improve the health and fitness activity levels of all pupils and staff. These covered both practical and theoretical aspects of health and fitness, including walking programmes, healthy eating and cooking.

Whilst S2 pupils were given a specific course on healthy lifestyles and choices and S4s benefited from sessions on study skills, and management of exam stress, S1s were introduced to healthy lifestyles through the “Walking project”. This is an integrated interdisciplinary initiative with all S1 pupils issued with pedometers and asked to keep a log of their activities. In tandem they received lessons in Home Economics, Maths, Science PSE, English and PE on nutrition, healthy recipes, benefits of exercise, and calculating energy input and output. Linked to this was a primary transition project called “Go for Gold”, where pairs of S1 pupils worked with associated primaries, encouraging pupils to walk to school and creating a very positive link to the school for the P7 pupils.

Staff also benefited from the investment in healthy activities in the school, aerobics and fitness classes as well as courses on de-stressing and football coaching were made available. A staff Scottish Slimmers class was also introduced, and promoted a healthier diet and significant weight loss. Many staff adopted walking as a way of keeping fit following the S1 Walking Project. An in-service day was also devoted to health and well-being, led by staff and concentrating on understanding and dealing with stress. *“It was a timely reminder that as professional we have to look after our own health and well-being”*

**Teacher, St Machar Academy.**

The school has now achieved “Commended” status as a Health Promoting school, and is only a short step away from achieving “Health Promoting School of Excellence” status.



See related DVD clip: Paths to health.





## 4. Increasing pupil engagement and motivation

### Kilsyth Academy – Creative arts in the curriculum

“Our Work in Creative Arts has enhanced our pupils’ learning experiences, improved confidence, presented opportunities to celebrate success and it has provided a firm foundation for the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in Kilsyth Academy.”

**Headteacher, Kilsyth Academy**

Developing the Creative Arts was a key focus for Kilsyth Academy, with the introduction of a wide range of activities, covering not only traditional arts subjects, but also involving Enterprise activities, Primary/Secondary liaison, Eco themes and Pupil Leadership.

Young people worked with professional writers, artists and dancers. S1 and S2 drama pupils worked with a Creative Writer on script-writing using the themes of ‘Tam O’Shanter’, ‘Pied Piper’ and ‘Chamber of Horrors’. The resulting productions were greatly enjoyed, with the skills and formats now embedded into junior school courses. In Art and Design two professional artists worked with S3 to S6 pupils providing them with guidance and expertise in the development of designs, and techniques, *“this has taken me out of my comfort zone and has given me confidence to work expressively with unfamiliar materials.”* **S4, Pupil.**

School staff have also been up-skilled as a result, thus ensuring sustainability. Professional dancers worked with Physical Education classes and dance clubs to develop new skills, and engage more young people in popular dance. Peer educators, trained by the professional dancers and school staff, now tutor a variety of school dance clubs, with resulting success in recent North Lanarkshire competitions, using a variety of modern routines developed by the pupils themselves.

The music curriculum includes the use of a digital recording studio, enabling pupils to improve their compositions and make professional recordings of their work. *“Music software in the recording studio has helped me with my composing and creativity and will hopefully help me achieve a good Higher Grade.”* **S5, Pupil.** The activity in this area has led to a music/



Enterprise initiative with a school rock band composing and recording their own materials, and performances and marketing supported by other pupils. This cross-curriculum theme continued through the community performance of the “Trash Walk” which incorporated Creative Arts, Eco activities and Pupil Leadership. Pupils designed a wide range of costumes, from recycled materials, which were modelled in a catwalk fashion show, organised, compèred and directed by pupils.



## Kirkland High School – Curricular development through the arts

“The inclusion of drama in the school curriculum helps to meet the needs of the learners in our school community. It has also been a catalyst for improving other aspects of our curricular provision and has enabled the school to extend and develop sustainable partnerships across the wider community.”

**Headteacher, Kirkland High**

Kirkland High School has had a long tradition in the performing arts, and decided to raise the aspirations of the school as well as its image in the community through the use of performing arts.

A new Drama Department was created, and a Principal Teacher of Drama appointed. This has allowed wider curricular access in theatrical drama, musical theatre, dance and technical theatre. Drama is now a popular subject choice for pupils in S3-S6.

The development of dance is also going from strength to strength and is proving a popular option for senior pupils. Additionally, the Kirkland Arts Festival is now an established annual event in the School and involves all the associated primary schools and the adjacent nursery school. The event has been very successful with very positive parental support and feedback.

The new Drama facility has greatly extended use of the old school hall by the school population, it is also regularly used by the local community groups (for example the Methil Choral Group, the Rotary Club of Levenmouth, Glamour School of Dance, and East Fife Ladies Choir.) which has positively raised the schools profile in the local area.

Through the development of drama the school has been able to offer a meaningful curriculum allowing personalisation, breadth, choice and relevance for their pupils, and to make positive connections with the local community. One of the pupils at Kirkland summed up their feelings about the school; *“We are a School of Ambition and that means we should*

*be ambitious for ourselves, our friends, our families and our school. Methil matters!!!”*



## Dunbar Grammar – School transformation through creative arts and enterprise

'It's fantastic to see students with so much confidence and self-reliance. They just seem to get on with it and see things through to the end.'

**Teacher, Dunbar Grammar**

Dunbar Grammar's vision was to transform their school, with every member of the school community being more confident, having increased self-worth, and greater expectations. They opted to do this through whole school participation in Creative and Performing Arts, setting up seven separate companies including; Theatre, Dance, Music, Film/Animation, Broadcasting, Corporate Identity and Catering.

A number of Artists in Residence were appointed to guide the companies, with students invited to sign up to the company(ies) of their choice. The companies have been made sustainable by both staff and students taking on leadership roles. In some cases, students run the company and in many cases teach younger students with teachers participating in the lessons.



The activities undertaken by companies are wide and varied, ranging from a coffee morning for residents from the local care home to the organisation of a vox pop for a Scottish Homecoming event, annual dance showcases and talent shows, and the making of publicity films for the primary transition to animation to be used in lessons. S6 students have generated all the associated publicity for the performances as well as the development of the school web site.

Recent and future activities include an environmental 'Dragon's Den' House competition, a whole school talent competition, and a Band Idol Challenge for S2. One of the main strengths of the company set-up is that the students can come up with their own ideas and see them through to conclusion.

The initiative has provided a wide range of pupil experiences, with the students running a talent school from audition stage to the final public performances. Pupil response to the programme has been very positive, *"it has boosted my confidence a lot, given us good opportunities to organise our own shows and lead our own classes ... I would love to study it at college or University"* **S6 Pupil, Dunbar Grammar.**

## Conclusion

Schools of Ambition has stimulated many changes within individual schools, and has also provided substantial learning about the process of change management within schools from which the wider educational community can benefit. The Programme has come to a conclusion, but many of the schools involved have stated that this is just the beginning of their transformational journey, a journey which is now galvanised by the demands of providing a Curriculum for Excellence. Feedback from the Annual Research Reports highlighted that the learning and activities from the programme has given schools confidence and enthusiasm to accelerated development work around Curriculum for Excellence.

*“There is a lot of apprehension about Curriculum for Excellence, but there is a lot of excitement too ... if I had not been involved (in Schools of Ambition) I would have been thinking, oh, this is going to be a big change”. Because we have done the Schools of Ambition, it is going to make the change a lot easier and the transition a lot simpler.”*

**Principal Teacher, Annual Research Report, 2009 p 28.**

In summary, schools successful in creating sustainable transformational change in their schools were able to:

- Build a school culture that welcomes change
- Facilitate and support teacher professionalism
- Innovate to meet the needs of all pupils

We would like to thank all of the schools who have taken part in the programme, many of whom have given generously of their time to share their activities and innovations with each other and with the wider education community. We are sure that their creativity, enthusiasm and dedication will inspire others in implementing Curriculum for Excellence in their schools.



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