This briefing provides advice for practitioners and can also be used to inform partners, learners and their parents of developments in Curriculum for Excellence.

CfE Briefing 11

Planning for Learning part 1: Through the Broad General Education

Scottish education is going through a period of transformation that will affect all learners. Approaches to the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment, awards and qualifications are all changing. Education Scotland is supporting improvement by evaluating evolving practice and sharing it nationally to inform discussion and promote innovation. This briefing explores emerging practice in planning for learning through the Broad General Education (BGE) in the early years, primary and secondary S1-S3 stages. It can be used alongside Planning for Learning parts 2 and 3 (CFE Briefings 12 and 13) that explore planning for further learning, training and employment post 16 and individualised educational programmes (IEPs).

Curriculum planning takes full account of the design principles, contexts and entitlements identified in Curriculum for Excellence. It involves a coherent approach to planning the curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment. It is based firmly on a clear identification of the learning needs of all young people and is designed to address and meet these needs and develop all young people as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.
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1. What are the purposes of planning for learning?

Planning for learning naturally takes different forms in different contexts and sectors. Whilst aspects of the advice in this paper will relate more to some contexts or sectors than to others, it draws together characteristics of effective planning which should help practitioners to ensure that their own planning is as focused and streamlined as possible. This is necessary because, at times, planning is becoming cumbersome and time consuming, thereby taking valuable time from teaching. No matter the sector or context, planning for learning is a means to an end. It is a design process that makes sure learning has breadth, is challenging, and enables learners to develop and apply their learning in relevant ways. It supports our shared ambition to increase achievement and raise attainment by promoting attributes, capabilities and skills (including higher-order thinking skills). And it is the means by which practitioners assemble learning experiences that inspire and motivate children to want to learn. In short, we plan learning to:

- ensure strong progression in and consolidation of the attributes, capabilities, skills (including higher-order thinking skills), knowledge and understanding across the BGE;

- provide learning experiences that motivate and inspire children to want to learn;

- increase achievement and raise attainment for all;

- ensure that an establishment's own values and priorities, such as equalities, are taken forward through learning experiences; and

- ensure that every learner achieves her/his potential through breadth, challenge and application, thereby

paving the way for successful achievement pathways through the senior phase into further learning, training or employment.

TIP: *Keep planning simple*

2. What are the key features of effective planning for learning?

At times, planning approaches take up too much time because they are complicated and seek to do too much. For example, sometimes planning that seeks to reflect progress through every individual E and O can lead to a fragmentation of learning and insufficient depth of study. Sometimes planning has too many layers that, whilst intended to serve different purposes, are too cumbersome to be wholly useful. This may be because the complementary purposes of an establishment's strategic curriculum/ programme planning have not been carefully aligned or blended with practitioners' planning of learning experiences. Planning can also be too formulaic and unresponsive to the unpredictability of learning for different learners. Since CfE has given practitioners the space to design learning which best meets the needs of their own learners, planning is now more responsive to local needs and contexts. This means that a single, one-size-fits-all template approach to planning at a national level cannot work. Practitioners are therefore usually best placed when they develop and use their own locally agreed planning approaches with colleagues. The following features, therefore, are intended to provide background context as practitioners review their own local approaches.

Effective planning for learning usually shows clearly both **what** will be

learned and **how** it will be achieved. It also shows how success will be evaluated, perhaps by specifying how learners will **show what they can do, know or understand,** and it is likely to align to the ways in which learners' progress and achievement is assessed, monitored and tracked[1]. To promote high levels of motivation, effective planning puts the learner at the centre by building directly on prior learning and by reflecting learners' curiosity, interests and aspirations, wherever feasible by involving learners and their parents/guardians in the process. Key features of effective planning for learning through the BGE are likely to include the following.

a) Planning for learning within an establishment is likely to be a **combination** of practitioners' short-term/lesson plans with establishment/ departmental curriculum approaches that set out overall structures such as programmes of study and longer-term goals.

b) Planning approaches that are **consistent across stages** within individual establishments help to promote seamless progression from stage to stage and, when required, enable different practitioners to teach from the plans at different times. Care is taken, however, to ensure that plans support appropriate learning, teaching and assessment for the stage of the child's development. For example, approaches used to support early level planning may not be suitable to support second level learning, and approaches used in primary and secondary sectors are likely to be different. By sharing approaches across transitions, be they within a sector or across sectors, all involved can contribute to ensuring continuity and progression in learning.

1   *Monitoring and tracking progress and achievement in the broad general education*

c) Planning ensures that, **over time**, learning experiences **progress, revisit and further develop** attributes, capabilities, skills (including higher-order thinking skills), knowledge and understanding, as appropriate to level and curriculum area(s). It is also likely to show which significant aspects of learning and/or Es and Os[2] provide the context.

d) Planning ensures that **entitlements** to develop essential skills for learning, life and work, such as literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are **embedded** in learning experiences across the curriculum, and how progression in each of these skills is being ensured.

e) Planning takes place across the **whole curriculum** – the ethos and life of the establishment, curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, and a range of other opportunities for personal achievement – to deliver high-quality, coherent learning experiences and progression, and to ensure that an establishment's own values and priorities, such as equalities, are fully embedded in learning.

f) When planning is for an individual subject, such as in mathematics or science in the primary and secondary sectors, planning specifies which skills and concepts are taught **discretely** and which are **delivered in contexts** across the curriculum to ensure they are reinforced and transferable.

g) Effective planning is **flexible**. It enables practitioners to use inspiring and spontaneous contexts for learning arising from learners' interests and life experiences and from local contexts, or major news

items and events. Often, when this is planned within topic/interdisciplinary learning (IDL)[3] approaches, particular care is taken to plan progression in learning in each subject or curriculum area. Planning should also show how the learning is enhanced through being combined. Topic/IDL contexts are usually best if **agreed at establishment level**, and perhaps between establishments. This ensures overall breadth of learning contexts from stage to stage, including across transitions, and that any **repetition is intended and planned**.

> **TIP:** *Don't multi-layer your planning – have a single focus*

h) Effective planning over time shows what the **principles** of curriculum design – challenge and enjoyment, breadth, progression, depth, personalisation and choice, coherence, and relevance – **mean in practice**.

3. What particular characteristics of learning need to be planned for?

The BGE has been designed to open up the ways in which children and young people learn so that they become better equipped with the skills they will need. Effective planning for learning, therefore, has a clear focus on the ways in which learning will take place. The approaches practitioners use will ensure the skills children need for learning, life and work are developed and reinforced. CfE Briefing 7[4] describes in detail this **'how'** of learning at the Senior Phase. The same **'how'** of learning also applies to the 3-15 stages of the BGE, with a clear focus on providing learning that inspires children and young people to want to learn, and which leads to effective achievement pathways through the senior phase and beyond. Particular characteristics of this learning include the following.

> **TIP:** *Work with colleagues in school to share planning*

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2 *Information on the significant aspects of learning in each curriculum area*
3 *CFE Briefing 4: Interdisciplinary Learning*
4 *CFE Briefing 7: Learning in the Senior Phase*

Learning independently, with planned opportunities for learners to: take decisions, initiate and organise tasks; ask questions and find information; demonstrate self-reliance; be clear about their own learning needs; effectively self-manage; and have opportunities to reflect on and understand what has been learned.

Taking responsibility for learning, with planned opportunities for learners to: take personal control of their own learning; influence and contribute to planning their own learning; develop an increased awareness of themselves as a learner; seek out learning opportunities linked to their own interests and aspirations; be willing to take on challenges; make informed choices and decisions; monitor their own progress and, as appropriate, modify strategies.

> **TIP:** *Be realistic in planning Experiences and Outcomes - planning to cover too many in any programme of learning can lead to fragmentation and superficiality*

Active learning, with planned opportunities for learners to: construct ideas about what they are encountering; develop skills such as problem solving by testing out their ideas and learning from experience; develop logical and creative thinking skills through doing, exploring and taking initiative; and explore current developments and issues and how they impact on learners and society, for example, environmental, scientific, global and technological issues.

Collaborative learning, with planned opportunities for learners to: work in partnership and in teams; take initiative and lead; act as learning resources for one another; work on team challenges and research tasks; take on roles and responsibilities; demonstrate awareness and respect for others; debate to develop informed views; and discuss learning and provide explanations to others.

Applying learning and skills development, with planned opportunities for learners to: use a range of skills, including literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills, when engaging in learning activities; engage in challenging topics to study open-ended investigations and topics in depth; explore current developments and issues and how they impact on themselves and society; be open to new ideas and develop the ability to think creatively and critically; and see the relevance of learning to society and future employment, including through learning outdoors and field trips.

4. How does quality assurance and moderation underpin effective planning for learning?

Effective planning for learning uses well-judged, proportionate approaches to self-evaluation, quality assurance and moderation, which are understood by all. In addition to the features described throughout this paper that can be used to inform self-improvement, other features may well include the following.

- Practitioners' learning plans are evaluated against establishment curriculum/programme plans, both to ensure that all significant aspects of learning are being covered and that learning builds effectively from stage to stage.

- Staff and managers make learning visits to classrooms and other places where learning takes place to evaluate the quality of planned learning in action, with a clear focus on what it is like to be a learner.

- Senior staff have a clear view of progression across stages and transitions in key areas of the curriculum because they monitor the impact of practitioners' plans on outcomes for learners, for example by sampling work or by working alongside learners. They can also ensure that any repetition of learning is done for sound reasons such as reinforcement. Sometimes, progression in learning is less strong because no overall establishment view is taken of vertical, stage-to-stage progression within a curriculum area.

- Staff work collaboratively in stage/departmental teams when planning for learning and when moderating outcomes, involving partners where appropriate to ensure shared understanding of standards and expectations.

- Staff seek the views of learners and their parents and use these to review the extent to which they feel involved in helping to inform the learning that takes place.