

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Education Officer

Committee: Educational Services Committee 12 June 2024

Subject: Senior Phase Curriculum**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report updates members on the offer of courses and awards to young people through the Senior Phase curriculum for session 2024/25, and sets out plans to ensure an equitable offer across all establishments.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- Note the breadth of the offer to young people by our schools and partner providers;
 - Agree next steps to explore development of a common Senior Phase timetable across our all of our secondary schools, bringing a proposal to Education Committee in March 2025; and
 - Agree to develop the use of digital courses and Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) courses on offer in our schools

3 Background

- 3.1 The present Education Reform agenda will bring about change in our approach to the Senior Phase. Recommendations of the Hayward Review *'It's our Future – Independent Review of Assessment and Qualifications'* proposed changes to the design, modes of delivery and output of the curriculum. Our own context requires us to ensure that we make best use of resources, and ensure that the offer to our young people is equitable, irrespective of what school they choose to attend. Helping our young people understand their skills and strengths will better prepare them for life beyond school.
- 3.2 Curriculum for Excellence contains six interlinked entitlements for our children and young people:
- a curriculum that is coherent from 3 to 18
 - a broad general education (from early years to S3)
 - a senior phase (S4-S6) where they can obtain qualifications
 - opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, focusing on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing
 - personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities that Curriculum for Excellence can provide
 - support in moving into positive and sustained destinations beyond school.

- 3.3** Our individual secondary schools each offer their own range of courses, based largely on the availability of staff working in their establishment. Courses range from National 2 to Advance Higher. The range of courses on offer in our schools is shown in **Appendix A**.
- 3.4** Our secondary schools also offer a range of certificated and uncertificated wider achievement experiences. To date we have over 50 separate wider achievement opportunities. For example, the John Muir Award, Barista Training, Young Enterprise Award, Youth Philanthropy Initiative, and Mark Scott Award. A full list of our wider achievement offer is provided in **Appendix B**.
- 3.5** Duke of Edinburgh remains a successful venture within our 5 Secondary schools and 2 ASN schools. This session we had 51 young people working towards their Bronze award, 20 working towards Silver Award and 2 towards their Gold Award. We have managed to secure £6,500 of funding for schools through DofE grants and bursaries to ensure these programmes are continuing to be delivered in schools and supporting inclusion and diversity amongst the participants. Uptake varies across schools, with different time allocated to initiatives – in some schools, time is given within the timetable for young people, in others, young people and staff give of their own time.
- 3.6** For the past 15 years, our secondary schools have worked together to provide a ‘Consortium’ offer – where subjects are more specialist in their nature, or where uptake in an individual school is low, schools work together to provide the opportunity to study a subject. This has largely been at the upper end of the qualifications framework, making it possible for a number of young people to travel to a neighbouring school to participate in an Advanced Higher subject not available in their own school.
- 3.7** As a consortium, we have 39 different courses being offered across all five of our secondary schools, with 612 learners pathways involved. Ranging from SCQF Level 5 National 5 up to and including Level 7 Advanced Higher.
- 3.8** Working with partners, we provide our young people with access to a wider range of qualifications and awards, such as college courses, Skills for Work, Foundation Apprenticeships and other bespoke courses offered in partnership with employers, where young people spend part of their week in school, part in college and part of their time working directly with an employer.
- 3.9** We are working in partnership with West College Scotland (Clydebank and Paisley campus), Glasgow Clyde College (Anniesland), City of Glasgow College (new partnership), Working4U and Strathclyde University (new partnership). Each week, 592 young people across our schools attend courses with partners.
- 3.10** Courses offered through partners range from SCQF Level 4 up to Level 8, with 43 separate learner pathways running. This includes areas such as Technologies, Business & Leisure, Construction, Education, Media and Computing. We offer 5 unique Foundation Apprenticeship opportunities in the

areas of Engineering, Social Services Children and Young people, Business Skills, Health Care and Craft Skills.

- 3.11** There is clear articulation between Apprenticeship programmes, with 10 out of 11 young people who were part of our college Engineering course with Babcock International going on to secure a Babcock Modern Apprenticeship. 5 out of 11 young people in our college Engineering course with BAE Systems have secured BAE Modern Apprenticeships. Within our Working4U courses, we have a number of pupils who have secured Modern Apprenticeships with the council after completing their Foundation Apprenticeships.

4 Main Issues

- 4.1** Although we make steady progress increasing the success rate of those presented for awards, a number of our young people find themselves with a limited choice at the time of selecting courses for their Senior Phase. This can be due to which school a young person attends, and which curriculum subjects are available in. For some of our young people, this can result in a lack of motivation to engage with studies, as they find themselves taking a subject they may have little interest or aptitude in. This can impact on both attendance and behaviour. For staff, this can present additional challenges of working with young people who may struggle in class and disengage from learning.
- 4.3** Some young people struggle to progress in a curriculum area or subject, finding themselves being withdrawn from presentation following the interim assessments in January. For some of our young people, this can mean that they can focus on studies where they have a greater chance of success, but are therefore presented for fewer subjects. Some parents are reluctant for their child to be withdrawn from presentation, resulting in additional pressure on the young person to continue studying a subject, and require staff to support a young person who is displaying little sign of progress.
- 4.4** For many of our secondary schools, there is a concerted effort to encourage young people to achieve in all of the subjects they elect to take. Clydebank High School has had demonstrable impact in its 'Strive for Five' programme, to encourage young people to work hard across all of the subjects they take. We presently offer differing curriculum models across our schools, making it possible to study more subjects in S4 in Our Lady & St. Patrick's High School than any other. Across all the curriculum models, there is significant variety in the number of courses young people are being presented for across our establishments. **Figure 1** below shows the distribution of subjects with SQA presentations for young people in S4:

Number of subjects with SQA presentations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Scotland	2	1	2	2	3	6	15	27	23	12	4	2
West Dunbartonshire	2	4	4	4	5	9	34	16	8	12	1	0
Clydebank High School	2	3	4	6	6	11	23	41	3	0	0	0
Dumbarton Academy	3	3	9	2	7	11	62	3	0	0	0	0
Our Lady & St Patrick's High School	1	5	2	1	2	2	1	3	6	67	8	1

St Peter the Apostle High School	2	4	6	4	7	14	63	1	0	0	0	0
Vale Of Leven Academy	4	5	3	4	4	8	13	30	31	0	0	0

Figure 1 – Distribution of the number of subjects with SQA presentations in S4.

4.5 Figure 2 below shows the distribution of subjects with SQA presentations for young people in S5:

Number of subjects with SQA presentations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Scotland	3	5	4	7	17	47	13	3	1	0	0	0
West Dunbartonshire	6	7	7	13	23	42	2	0	0	0	0	0
Clydebank High School	2	9	7	13	30	39	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dumbarton Academy	5	7	5	7	15	47	13	0	0	0	0	0
Our Lady & St Patrick's High School	8	8	3	11	29	40	1	0	0	0	0	0
St Peter the Apostle High School	5	6	12	20	17	38	2	0	0	0	0	0
Vale Of Leven Academy	8	4	4	9	22	52	1	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 2 – Distribution of the number of subjects presented in S5.

4.6 Differing curriculum models presents a challenge for working together. Whilst our schools have worked together to align two columns across all schools, this provides limited opportunity for our young people to benefit. It also results in these two columns being ‘crowded’, as all partnership courses and consortium courses need to be offered here. To achieve a more equitable offer across our schools, we would need to move beyond the alignment of two columns into a fully aligned Senior Phase timetable. This approach is already in place in a number of local authorities across Scotland. It would take time to consult on and develop a common Senior Phase timetable, which will be developed as part of the Delivery Plan for Education in 2024/25, returning to Education Committee with a proposal in March 2025, with a view to young people making choices in a new model during session 2025/26, implementing a new model in time for the start of session 2026/27.

4.7 During the pandemic, our schools made good use of technology to deliver courses, but when schools returned to face to face provision, so too did Senior Phase courses. Digital is almost solely used as an add-on for homework and revision, but seldom used for course delivery beyond its use as a presentation tool or sharing of content/resources. In most of the local authorities of Scotland, they have continued to build their online course offer, and better meet the needs and interests of their young people, whilst also preparing them more adequately for future study or employment.

4.8 Schools have agreed to offer one qualification online in the coming session, but significantly more could be done to increase this offer, either by developing our own approach to digital learning, or participating further in the offer of Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar ‘e-Sgoil’. Barriers to adoption of digital courses previously were staff skills in delivering online courses, supervision of young people remotely taking a course, and the monitoring of progress of a young person who was not physically taking part in a school course. Other

local authorities have overcome these barriers. We will develop our digital offer as part of the Delivery Plan for 2024/25, returning to the Education Committee in November 2024 with a proposal for implementation in session 2025/26.

- 4.9** Many subjects are delivered in a compartmentalized way, allowing young people little opportunity to make connections across their learning, or help deepen awareness of their development of cross-transferable skills. Whilst almost all young people will be able to list their qualifications, many struggle to articulate the skills they have developed, potentially underselling their value in a labour market, or inhibiting their ability to secure a place in further or higher education. As part of our partnership agreement with Skills Development Scotland we will work to strengthen links made between course content and skills that young people develop in session 2024/25.
- 4.10** During their time in the Broad General Education up until the end of S3, our young people will have participated in interdisciplinary learning (IDL) projects, helping them develop skills across subject areas. One of the recommendations of the Hayward Review of Assessment and Qualifications was the inclusion of 'Project Learning' as part of a wider 'Scottish Diploma of Achievement'. The pursuit of IDL in the Senior Phase would make us well placed for any change required of us, and many of our young people would be better equipped to articulate the skills they have developed in context. A working group will be established across our schools to develop this proposal, returning with recommendations for committee in November 2024.

5 People Implications

- 5.1** There are no direct people implications arising from this report.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1** There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Failure to deliver a high quality Senior Phase may have a direct impact on the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan, particularly in relation to an economy that is strong and flourishing.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.1** Screening and impact assessments will be carried out proposals to alter the delivery of the Senior Phase.

9 Consultation

9.1 Secondary Head Teachers, Legal and Finance were consulted in the development of this paper.

10 Strategic Assessment

10.1 An equitable, high quality Senior Phase contributes directly to the council's strategic priority of an economy that is strong and flourishing.

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Appendices: Appendix A: Senior Phase Offer
Appendix B: Wider Achievement Offer

Background Papers: none

Wards Affected: All