
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	3 September 2024
Report By:	Ruth Binks Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/33/24/MR
Contact Officer:	Adam Stephenson Education Officer	Contact No:	01475 712891
Subject:	Senior Phase Curriculum Consultation		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting

1.2 Historically a review of the senior phase curriculum offer in Inverclyde was undertaken after the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence. Since then the landscape of the senior phase offer has changed. We now see young people undertaking a wider variety of qualifications over the course of their senior phase.

1.3 A senior phase working group has been set up to evaluate the current senior phase curriculum offer in Inverclyde schools and to identify any potential future models.

14 The senior phase working group would like to explore potential options for more flexible timetabling in the senior phase and for schools to undertake a consultation with their stakeholders during the 2024/5 academic year.

1.5 A report on the responses and proposals for any amendments to the current approach to the senior phase will be brought back to the Education and Communities Committee. If any changes are identified, and planning time allows, then the intention would be to implement the changes for the 2025/26 academic year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Education and Communities Committee:

- approves that a consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders on the senior phase curriculum model; and
- approves that a report on the outcome of the consultation and any identified changes will be brought back to a future meeting of this committee prior to being implemented.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 Historically all Inverclyde Secondary Schools agreed to follow a common timetabling model across the senior phase. Although schools can run individual timetables, there are many benefits to all schools following a common model, including the provision of consortium arrangements and ensuring consistency of provision across the authority. This arrangement resulted in all S4 pupils being required to select six courses to study.
- 3.2 The landscape of the senior phase has significantly changed over the last 5 to 10 years. We now see young people undertaking a variety of qualifications over the course of their senior phase. Many of these remain traditional, for example English and Mathematics, and subjects which require a final exam to be sat in the exam diet in April/May each year. We now see a significant increase in offer of qualifications that do not see a final exam, but which contain ongoing assessment including National Progression Awards, Skills for Work and Foundation Apprenticeships. Courses are also offered through West College Scotland as part of the School/College Vocational Programme.
- 3.3 A senior phase working group has been set up to examine the current curriculum offer and senior phase in Inverclyde and in order to suggest potential improvements to the learner journey for our young people. Beyond school, our young people have varied post school destinations. For our 2022/23 leavers the table below shows the destinations young people left school to enter:

% Employed	20.6
	2
% Further Education	27.4
	5
% Higher Education	41.3
	7
% Personal Skills Development	1.24
% Training	5.34
% Unemployed Not Seeking	1.37
% Unemployed Seeking	2.24
% Voluntary Work	0.37

We are also seeing an increase in pupils who leave school in S4 and pursue other pathways. Compared to 2021/22 there has been an increase by approximately 50% of pupils who left school in S4. Compared to 2020/21 this has been an increase of 90%. The table below shows the pathways for the 2022/23 leavers who left school in S4.

% Employed	16.18
% Further Education	63.24
% Higher Education	1.47
% Training	13.24
% Unemployed Seeking	5.88

- 3.4 Our senior phase curriculum model needs to ensure that our young people are best prepared for the pathway they choose. There is still a significant number of young people who enter further and higher education for further study. These young people require a variety of courses to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to prepare them for further academic study both in school and at college and/or university.

- 3.5 When Curriculum for Excellence was introduced, different approaches were taken to the senior phase and the number of subjects offered in S4 can differ from authority to authority and even school to school. Allocating more time to fewer subjects in S4 allowed for maximum use of option columns over the senior phase and gave a good progression rate to Highers. However, this was predicated on pupils being secure in their initial choices and did not always allow for the increased prevalence of different types of qualifications. Considering the introduction of a more flexible approach to timetabling, specifically in S4, would mean we can provide more flexible pathways suited to the needs of the individuals. In any timetabling model there is always an element of compromise, and this would need to be explored.
- 3.6 Young people who plan to remain in school beyond S4 with a pathway to Further and Higher Education require to develop a wider range of knowledge and still have the flexibility to make changes to their choices as they move through the senior phase. A more flexible model could allow these young people to study seven courses, all taken within their base school. Young people who choose a pathway that would result in employment, training or further education also require to develop their knowledge and skills, but this may also need to include study on a vocational pathway or work based learning. Some young people will be undecided and need to experience a range of options to allow maximum flexibility.
- 3.7 There are times when young people are opting to undertake learning that is not purely based at school. This approach requires more time allocated to allow expanded learning opportunities. For instance, work experience may require a number of blocks of time to spend with an employer and build up the requisite skills and experience. To allow this to happen young people could reduce the number of courses in school. These young people would still be gaining qualifications that will support their pathway as work-based learning can be accredited.
- 3.8 Potential alternative models specifically for S4 using a more flexible model could be:

Pupil A	Pupil B	Pupil C
<i>Pathway to University</i>	<i>Pathway to College</i>	<i>Pathway to employment</i>
<i>Selects seven courses that are offered all within their base school.</i>	<i>Selects five courses that are offered within their base school.</i>	<i>Selects three courses that are offered within their base school.</i>
	<i>Selects one course that is offered at college.</i>	<i>Selects one courses that is offered at college.</i>
		<i>Undertakes an extended work experience placement and gains work base learning qualifications e.g. First Aid at Work, Employability, Work Experience, Customer Service.</i>
<i>Remains at school until S6</i>	<i>Remains at school until S5</i>	<i>Remains at school until S4</i>

3.9 Considering a more flexible approach to senior phase timetabling and the number of courses on offer to match the individual’s personal pathway could allow young people to experience a greater and more appropriate range of learning experiences.

4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 The senior phase working group would like to explore potential options for more flexible timetabling in the senior phase and for schools to undertake a consultation with their stakeholders

during the 2024/5 academic year. If changes are identified, then they would be implemented for the 2025/26 academic year.

- 4.2 A report on the responses and proposals for any amendments to the current approach to the senior phase will be brought back to the Education and Communities Committee. If any changes are identified, then they would be implemented for the 2025/26 academic year.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal/Risk		X
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	X	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People’s Rights & Wellbeing	X	
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

5.2 Finance

Any proposals within this report will be within the allocated budget.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

5.3 Legal/Risk

N/A

5.4 Human Resources

N/A

5.5 Strategic

This paper specifically meets the aim of theme 2 of the Inverclyde Partnership Plan “Working People”.

5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

x	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA will be required if changes are made after the consultation.
	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

x	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage will be completed if any changes to the senior phase curriculum progress.
	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

x	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA will be required if changes are made to the curriculum.
	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 This paper proposes that a stakeholder consultation takes place.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None