

ambitious, excellent schools

our agenda for action



CHOICE

ACCOUNTABILITY

OPPORTUNITY

LEADERSHIP



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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foreword



There are many ambitious, excellent schools in Scotland. And there is much to celebrate in Scotland's educational success: working together, local authorities, head-teachers, teachers, parents and pupils can, and do, achieve great results.

In ambitious, excellent schools, young people get the best opportunity to realise their full potential. We want all Scottish schools to be truly excellent. We want them to reach higher and we will support them in doing so, ensuring that no individual or community is left behind in the process.

This ambition lay behind the actions we promised in *Educating for Excellence*, the Executive's response to the National Debate and our *Partnership for a Better Scotland*. The commitments in those documents remain at the root of what we do. The programme for action in this document updates our agenda and reflects how our thinking has developed.

Since devolution we have concentrated on getting the foundations of our system right and ready for further development. Following years of under-investment, we have legislated for standards in schools, and invested in our teachers, in delivering universal early years education and in the largest school building programme in modern times.

Our comprehensive education system is right for Scotland and it performs in the top class on the world stage. The comprehensive schools we want to see are rich, colourful and diverse, offering choice for pupils and with ambition for themselves and for each and every one of their pupils. No one in Scotland should be required to select a school to get the first rate education they deserve and are entitled to. Choice between schools in Scotland is no substitute for the universal excellence we seek and Scotland's communities demand.

Even with the sound achievements of our schools, more still needs to be done and the pace of change needs to accelerate. When you have seen excellence, you want it delivered everywhere and quickly – that is what drives our agenda.

While many of our pupils excel, too many leave school with too little. While we do well in comparison to most nations, our ambition is that, over time, we do even better. Our agenda for action sets out our plans to transform our schools, our secondary schools in particular.

Ambitious, Excellent Schools sets out our agenda for the most comprehensive programme of modernisation for a generation or more. It ranges across actions to heighten expectations, to give more freedom for teachers and schools, greater choice and opportunity for pupils and better support for learning and to create tougher, intelligent accountabilities. All of our actions over the next few years will be focused on delivering this agenda. Today, we are publishing *A Curriculum for Excellence and Assessment, Testing and Reporting 3-14* which set out detailed plans for two important planks of our agenda. And we will set out similar detailed plans for other parts of the agenda over the coming months.

Our agenda, and the actions in this document, will drive the improvements we need to see as we build a confident, ambitious Scotland.



Peter Peacock

Minister for Education and Young People



Euan Robson

Deputy Minister for Education
and Young People



agenda for action

- Our agenda for action is built on our belief in the potential of all young people and our commitment to help each of them realise that potential.

We know that all of our young people can make a great personal contribution, among their families, friends, schools, communities and to Scotland as a whole, if given the chance to do so.

We want them to have the self-esteem to be confident, happy and ambitious. Our agenda is focused on helping each of our young people imagine a positive future for themselves and those around them and helping them to make that future possible.

Our agenda for action involves:

- **heightened expectations, stronger leadership and ambition**
- **more freedom for teachers and schools**
- **greater choice and opportunity for pupils**
- **better support for learning**
- **tougher, intelligent accountabilities**

Our agenda will be achieved through:

- **High expectations, high quality leadership and confident, ambitious schools**

Good leadership is critical to a successful school. Success comes from aiming high with the clear vision, ethos and communication that good leadership brings. We will act to support high quality school leadership and inspired, ambitious school communities.

- **Professional freedom for teachers and schools to tailor learning to the needs of individual young people**

The people best placed to make judgements about the learning needs of individual young people are those who work with them most closely. Within a framework of clear national standards and local authority support, teachers and other professionals in schools must have the freedom to exercise their professional judgement to deliver excellent learning and teaching. We will act to give them that freedom.

- **Choice and opportunity for young people to help each of them realise their own potential**

Our young people have a very wide range of individual skills, talents, aspirations and enthusiasms and their success comes through realising their individual potential. All young people should have a secure foundation in literacy, numeracy and other essential skills and capabilities to help them achieve their potential. We will act to give young people the opportunity to gain these essential skills, and to give each of them the opportunity to choose and develop the other personal skills and talents most important to them.



➤ **Support for learning for young people in challenging circumstances**

Many young people face challenges in their lives that, left unaddressed, would limit their capacity to learn and succeed. Those challenges may be temporary or long term. Whatever the cause, our schools and other children's services must work together to maximise the opportunities for these young people to benefit from the learning environment. We will act to give these young people the best opportunities to develop their potential through better support for learning.

➤ **Tough, intelligent accountabilities**

Delivering excellence in education requires both professional freedom and public accountability. Scotland already has a world renowned system of inspection and evaluation: we will build on this to ensure further, sustained improvement in our schools. We need systems that are proportionate, that focus on outcomes, that promote self evaluation, and that provide targeted support to those who are struggling. We will focus the role of the Scottish Executive on the national framework to ensure that Scotland performs well, that we stand comparison with other high performing nations, and that we improve our performance over time. We will expect local authorities to drive improvement at the local level and to add value to the work of their schools. We will expect schools to meet the needs of their community and each and every one of their pupils. We will act to build, at each level, systems of tough, intelligent accountability that foster ambition and allow proper, informed public scrutiny.

context

Our commitment

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 was one of the earliest pieces of legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament. For the first time, this clearly defined the purpose of school education: to encourage the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the young person to their fullest potential. The Act gave a clear structure for improvement and signalled our commitment to school education as a key priority and responsibility.

Through the Act, everyone involved in Scottish education – the Scottish Executive, local authorities and schools - is committed to seeking improvement. The long-term, strategic direction for that improvement is set out in the National Priorities in Education which ensure that improvement is not merely about academic attainment, but encompasses the whole needs of the young person and the whole life of the school. The National Priorities set a broad vision for Scottish education.

National Priorities in Education

- › **Achievement and Attainment** To raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results
- › **Framework for Learning** To support and develop the skills of teachers, the self discipline of pupils and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to teaching and learning
- › **Inclusion and Equality** To promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser used languages
- › **Values and Citizenship** To work with parents to teach pupils respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society, and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society
- › **Learning for Life** To equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society, and to encourage creativity and ambition



Our programme

This document sets out in some detail the next set of actions to help schools achieve excellence. We will deliver this agenda by working in partnership with other stakeholders in education under our joint commitment and responsibility to secure improvement.

Our investment

We have invested heavily since 1999 to rebuild the foundations for a successful school system.

Teachers' agreement

The teachers' agreement on pay and conditions of service, in 2001, was a landmark for Scottish education. It brought better recognition and better pay for teachers, alongside modernisation of out-dated terms and conditions of employment. Among the benefits flowing from the agreement are:

- › **a teacher induction programme providing a guaranteed and supported teaching post for newly qualified teachers to allow them to achieve the standard for full registration within one year**
- › **chartered teacher programmes providing increased rewards for teachers who demonstrate the very highest standards in the classroom, while ensuring our most capable teachers do not feel forced to move to management posts merely for financial return**
- › **a contractual obligation ensuring that all teachers undertake 35 hours of professional development each year to maintain and enhance their teaching skills**
- › **remodelled career structure arrangements and the introduction of job-sizing resulting in a reduction in the layers of school management and better matching of pay to job responsibilities**
- › **agreement on clear roles for teachers and support staff with increased numbers of support staff releasing teachers' time to teach**

School estate strategy

We have initiated the largest school building programme of modern times which will deliver 300 new, or substantially refurbished, schools by 2009, along with widespread improvements in many other schools. We are supporting school building through Public Private Partnership projects with a capital value of over £2 billion, the Schools Fund capital grant of over £75 million per year, and the general capital resources available to local authorities under the prudential framework. This investment is transforming the learning and teaching environment for many young people and teachers, with well-designed, well-built schools that have modern facilities that inspire young people, teachers and communities, and meet their aspirations and evolving needs.

Early years education

We have delivered nursery places for all 3 and 4 year old children whose parents want places, as a key part of the process of getting the foundations for learning right.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Good ICT is a powerful tool to support and transform learning and teaching. We have made considerable progress in opening up the opportunities of ICT for schools and young people: every pupil now has access to modern ICT facilities and the vast majority of schools are linked to the internet. We are continuing to invest in improving communication links through the Scottish Schools Digital Network and we are supporting broadband initiatives to increase capacity further.



Our successes

We can be proud of what young people and their teachers achieve in schools in Scotland:

- › **in the most recent OECD achievement survey, Scotland was well-placed within the top third of developed countries in all three areas tested**
- › **in 2004, 47% of pupils gained 5 or more awards at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level 5 (Standard Grade at 1-2 or Intermediate 2 at A-C) by the end of S6, compared to 37% in 1999**
- › **attainment in literacy and numeracy for younger children continues to improve**
- › **more and more young people are being educated in smaller classes and in modern learning environments**
- › **the vast majority of our families take advantage of pre-school education**
- › **half our young people go on to higher education in university or college, and we have one of the highest graduation rates among OECD countries**
- › **we have a world renowned system of inspection and self-evaluation**
- › **we have world leading teacher induction arrangements which benefit the new generation of teachers and the schools in which they work**

Our challenges

But too many young people still come out with too little:

- › **the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils in S4 has remained flat in recent years and around 15% of 16-19 year olds are not in education, employment or training**
- › **we know that, in particular, many boys are underachieving**
- › **we know from the National Debate in Education that parents and teachers worry about the volume and nature of assessment and about a cluttered curriculum and, from evidence from inspections, that there are weaknesses in the structure and detail of the curriculum**

- › **we know from school inspections that there is weakness in leadership in a small percentage of schools**
- › **we know that our young people will need to be increasingly highly skilled and high achieving to respond to future demographic and economic challenges**
- › **we know we need to keep modernising our approaches in helping schools take account of wider societal changes that affect behaviour and the environment for learning**

We need to capitalise on our successes and we need to address our challenges. We have a strong education system, with young people who achieve well against international comparisons, and a committed and able teaching profession. We must build on that very strong base to seek and achieve excellence in all our schools and to enable all our young people to maximise their potential.

Our framework

The Scottish Executive is committed to ensuring that all our young people are safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected, responsible and included. They should have access to positive learning environments and opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills, ambition, confidence and self-esteem to the fullest potential. All of our policies for children and young people are focused on that common goal.

Schools play a vital part in achieving these rounded outcomes for young people. But they cannot do so in isolation from other influences on young people's lives. Schools work with other agencies, such as health services, leisure services, social work, police, the Children's Reporter and the private and voluntary sectors. For example, social work and the Reporter help address issues in some children's lives that are barriers to educational progress; and schools work closely with health and leisure services to ensure children are active and healthy, with youth justice teams to tackle offending behaviour, and with social work to identify cases where there are concerns about child protection. The programme for schools described in this document is an integral part of our wider strategy for ensuring all our children and young people reach their full potential.



heightened expectations, stronger leadership and ambition

➤ High expectations, high quality leadership and confident, ambitious schools

Good leadership is critical to a successful school. Success comes from aiming high with the clear vision, ethos and communication that good leadership brings. We will act to support high quality school leadership and inspired, ambitious school communities.

Excellence standard to set new levels for ambition and inspection

HMIE will:

- establish a new 6 point Quality Indicator scale which will institute a new excellence standard for school and local authority inspection and be introduced in school inspections from August 2005
- report on definitions of the key characteristics of excellent schools in the first half of 2005

Leadership development, supported by the Hunter Foundation, to foster talent

We will:

- establish a leadership academy, by the end of 2005, to give access to world class thinking on school leadership and to allow the sharing of experience of school leaders
- enhance leadership development opportunities for senior school and local authority staff through programmes such as Columba 1400, beginning in mid-2005
- establish a mentoring and coaching programme of peer support for headteachers, senior managers and those with the potential and ambition to take on these roles, beginning in mid-2005

Schools of ambition programme to bring about transformation

We will:

- institute a programme for secondary schools, with immediate effect, to bring about a step change in ambition and achievement with:
 - automatic access onto the programme for schools receiving intensive post inspection support for improvement from HMIE
 - nomination by local authorities of schools most likely to benefit from the programme – access will be assessed on a range of factors including the quality of the plan for the school, by a core group of HMIE, local authority representatives and the Scottish Executive
 - support by philanthropic donors whenever appropriate and possible, and by local people who are willing to share their success with the school
 - schools in the programme will access the full range of enhanced devolved school management
 - new investment to support at least 20 schools by 2007

Standard for Headship and selection procedures to ensure all headteachers are prepared for school leadership

We will:

- › revise the Standard for Headship in 2005 to ensure it continues to reflect shared leadership priorities in education
- › establish new routes to achieve the Standard for Headship, during 2006, to provide choice and alternatives to the Scottish Qualification for Headship
- › recommend new and more rigorous procedures for selecting headteachers to take effect from the end of 2005

Revitalised Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

We will:

- › publish the report of a review of ITE, by the end of 2004, which will set clear challenges to universities and local authorities to:
 - work in partnership to develop new teachers able to meet the demands of the 21st century
 - significantly increase provision of part-time and distance learning to widen access
 - ensure ITE courses lay the foundations for Continuous Professional Development through each teacher's career.

Enhanced Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to support confident, able teachers

We will:

- › deliver improved CPD opportunities to build on the success of the induction scheme
- › support the newly appointed National Co-ordinator to facilitate sharing good practice
- › promote further the recently launched chartered teacher programme to build on its early success
- › build on recent investments to promote joint training for teachers, social workers, community learning and development workers and health workers to optimise integrated working



more freedom for teachers and schools

➤ Professional freedom for teachers and schools to tailor learning to the needs of individual young people

The people best placed to make judgements about the learning needs of individual young people are those who work with them most closely. Within a framework of clear national standards and local authority support, teachers and other professionals in schools must have the freedom to exercise their professional judgement to deliver excellent learning and teaching. We will act to give them that freedom.

Curriculum for Excellence 3-18 to free up learning and teaching

We will:

- accept in full *A Curriculum for Excellence*, the report of the first phase of the curriculum review undertaken by the Curriculum Review Group, to:
 - provide, for the first time, a modern curriculum 3-18 focused on:
 - achieving clearly defined rounded outcomes for young people
 - smoother transition between different stages of education, especially the entry to formal primary schooling
 - offer new choice, space and time within the curriculum to teachers and schools to design learning to suit the needs of young people
- systematically review the curriculum. As the first stage starting immediately and for implementation from 2007, we will:
 - redesign the science curriculum 3-18
 - remove unnecessary content from the primary curriculum to free up space for innovation and creativity
 - overhaul the curriculum for S1 to S3 to provide more choice for pupils and more time to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills, wherever needed, and to inject greater pace, relevance and challenge to improve motivation and attainment

More flexibility and choice in exams

We will:

- abolish the age and stage regulations by the end of 2005, and replace them with guidance on identifying the right time for individuals to sit exams
- expand choice for schools through new skills-for-work courses and qualifications beginning in 2005
- review Standard Grade and its links with other National Qualifications, by 2007, to simplify the structure, widen opportunities and improve progression
- work with the SQA to develop the potential of ICT to support assessment

Improved assessment of 3-14 year olds to support learning

We will:

- report annually to parents on the results of a new sample based survey of achievement, from 2005, to replace the current blanket annual 5-14 test survey

- › ensure all schools are part of the assessment is for learning programme, by 2007, to ensure that assessment supports learning
- › develop the on-line national assessment bank for teachers

Greater devolved school management to give headteachers new opportunities to develop their schools to best meet local needs

We will:

- › issue guidance to local authorities, by mid-2005, to:
 - ensure that schools have three year budgets
 - ensure a minimum devolution of 80% budget control to schools, moving towards 90%
 - extend the scope of headteachers' decision making, for example, on staffing structures

Wider opportunities for teachers to teach across sectors

We will:

- › repeal the School Code, by June 2005, to give primary teachers more scope to teach in secondary schools where this is in pupils' interests
- › introduce new regulations, by June 2005, to maintain safeguards relating to registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)

Smaller class sizes and more teachers and other staff to support learning

We will:

- › deliver new resources to allow the employment of 53,000 teachers and more support staff by 2007
- › target part of this new resource to reduce class sizes in P1 and in S1 and S2 Maths and English and to deliver wider reductions in pupil:teacher ratios

Promoting better behaviour to support a positive learning and teaching environment

We will:

- › introduce a new survey of indiscipline in schools to give the Scottish Executive, local authorities and schools an on-going and clearer picture of changes in pupil behaviour
- › work with stakeholders, including teacher representatives, headteachers, Directors of Education, local authorities and the GTCS, on monitoring and evaluation of the range of approaches to bring about better behaviour and better learning, including inviting HMIE to ensure, through on-going inspection, the implementation of *Better Behaviour – Better Learning*
- › support schools and teachers to develop and share effective approaches to classroom discipline, such as restorative justice and staged intervention
- › strengthen the role of teachers, pupil support staff and home-school link workers in promoting positive behaviour through professional development and sharing effective approaches
- › promote better engagement of pupils, parents and communities in setting high expectations for young people of their conduct and their contribution to school, community and family life



greater choice and opportunity for pupils

➤ Choice and opportunity for young people to help each of them realise their own potential

Our young people have a very wide range of individual skills, talents, aspirations and enthusiasms and their success comes through realising their individual potential. All young people should have a secure foundation in literacy, numeracy and other essential skills and capabilities to help them achieve their potential. We will act to give young people the opportunity to gain these essential skills, and to give each of them the opportunity to choose and develop the other personal skills and talents most important to them.

Curriculum for Excellence 3–18 to give the right pace and challenge for young people

We will:

- through the implementation of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, progressively develop a curriculum that:
 - is focused on enabling all young people to become:
 - successful learners
 - effective contributors
 - responsible citizens
 - confident individuals
 - ensures that literacy and numeracy remain at the heart of all learning
 - allows more opportunity to study subjects in-depth earlier, but still in the context of a broad curriculum
 - allows more scope to progress through courses earlier and allow more time for highers and advanced highers
 - allows more time for music, drama, PE and sport and work related learning

Recognising achievement of all young people in S1 to S3

We will:

- work with local authorities and others to introduce new ways of recognising achievement of young people, for example, in sport, community activity and leadership
- develop standards for this recognition of achievement, by 2007, to ensure it is valued by employers, colleges and universities

Partnerships between schools and colleges to provide young people with the best possible learning environment and experience

We will:

- create new skills-for-work qualifications as part of the National Qualifications framework by 2007
- give pupils better access to colleges
- expect schools to have formal partnership arrangements with colleges

More specialists in subjects such as PE, Music, Art and Drama, and in primary schools, to open up opportunities for pupils

We will:

- › as part of the 53,000 teacher commitment by 2007, train an additional 400 PE specialists and more visiting specialists in subjects such as Music, Art and Drama
- › provide new CPD opportunities, by the end of 2005, to enable primary teachers to develop specialist skills

More out of school hours opportunities across a wide range of activities to help young people develop their skills and confidence

We will:

- › encourage more opportunities for all pupils for out of school hours activities, summer schools and camps, including more opportunity for every young person to have at least one residential experience
- › ensure shared good practice and innovation through the Scottish Study Support network and programme

Personalising learning and personal learning planning

We will:

- › develop personalised learning for young people based on sound personal learning planning in schools and classrooms to encourage involvement of pupils and their parents in planning their own learning
- › issue guidance, by 2007, that builds on good practice on annual reporting to parents to ensure parents' basic right to information on their children's performance

Promotion of better, more flexible parental involvement in their children's learning

We will:

- › reform School Board legislation to improve parental representation and involvement in school decision making and will consult at the beginning of 2005
- › provide guidance for parents and schools, by the end of 2004, on how parents can best support their children's learning
- › promote sharing good practice on effective parental involvement from mid 2005, so that schools and parents can build on what works well for others
- › enhance information for parents on school performance through *Scottish Schools Online* in *Parentzone*



better support for learning

➤ Support for learning for young people in challenging circumstances

Many young people face challenges in their lives that, left unaddressed, would limit their capacity to learn and succeed. Those challenges may be temporary or long term. Whatever the cause, our schools and other children's services must work together to maximise the opportunities for these young people to benefit from the learning environment. We will act to give these young people the best opportunities to develop their potential through better support for learning.

Implement the Additional Support for Learning Act to address the needs of young people who require extra help for learning

We will:

- publish a statutory Code of Practice, by mid-2005, to provide practical advice and guidance to all those involved in implementing the changes introduced by the Act
- give parents of children who require extra help in school access to mediation services, by the end of 2005, to help them discuss and resolve any concerns they may have about their child's education
- introduce statutory Co-ordinated Support Plans, towards the end of 2005, for those young people with the most extensive needs requiring support from agencies outwith education
- give parents access to new independent Tribunals, by the end of 2005, to consider issues relating to Co-ordinated Support Plans

Personal support systems in schools to help young people benefit from learning

We will:

- publish the outcome of the review of guidance, by the end of 2004, to:
 - reinforce the importance of personal support systems in schools
 - set out what pupils and parents are entitled to expect
 - provide a framework of good practice within which schools and local authorities can develop systems appropriate to their circumstances

Integrated community schools to meet the needs of the child

We will:

- › bring together the concepts of the integrated community school and the health promoting school as part of our vision of what makes an excellent school
- › encourage use of new resources under the 53,000 teachers commitment to employ more teachers working with young people who require additional support for learning

HMIE will:

- › publish a self-evaluation framework, by spring 2005, to help schools deliver integrated services to their pupils

Equal opportunities to enable all young people to benefit from learning

We will:

- › roll out an anti-sectarian education resource for use in schools and youth groups from August 2005
- › support development and piloting of training to mainstream anti-discrimination into the curriculum
- › support training for local schools and authorities on implementation of race relations legislation



tougher, intelligent accountabilities

› Tough, intelligent accountabilities

Delivering excellence in education requires both professional freedom and public accountability. Scotland already has a world renowned system of inspection and evaluation: we will build on this to ensure further, sustained improvement in our schools. We need systems that are proportionate, that focus on outcomes, that promote self-evaluation, and that provide targeted support to those who are struggling. We will focus the role of the Scottish Executive on the national framework to ensure that Scotland performs well, that we stand comparison with other high performing nations, and that we improve our performance over time. We will expect local authorities to drive improvement at the local level and to add value to the work of their schools. We will expect schools to meet the needs of their community and each and every one of their pupils. We will act to build, at each level, systems of tough, intelligent accountability that foster ambition and allow proper, informed public scrutiny.

Testing Scotland's performance internationally

We will:

- › benchmark Scotland against international standards, particularly through the work of the OECD, as a basis for bringing about further improvement in performance

Integrated, proportionate inspection to support improvement and target action

HMIE will:

- › begin a new round of proportionate inspection of local authorities in 2005 to ensure that local authorities:
 - develop the school follow-through improvement programme, to a standard agreed with HMIE
 - have robust quality assurance systems and promote rigorous self-evaluation by schools, to a standard agreed with HMIE
- › inspect all schools at least once during a pupil's time at both primary and secondary school

Support and challenge for local authorities to deliver continuous improvement

We will:

- › publish a performance report on the National Priorities, by 2006, to assess the performance of each local authority since 2003
- › refresh the National Priorities measures and indicators, by the end of 2005, to focus on outcomes
- › encourage local authorities to work together to deliver better services and cost efficiencies

Integrated framework of planning to support joint working

We will:

- › introduce integrated children's services planning and reporting by April 2005
- › promote partnership working by inspection bodies, led by HMIE, beginning in 2005, with a national programme of inspection of child protection
- › introduce more flexibility in the National Priorities Action Fund, by April 2005, to allow local authorities to target resource to meet local need





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