

Carol McDonald (Lead Officer, Secondary School Inspections, HMIE)

See presentation slides

- CfE is there to improve outcomes for our young people
- HMI are seeing differences in the classroom and young people are increasingly being given more complex tasks
- Why BGE/ Senior Phase? – encourages learning across all 8 curriculum areas until end of S3
- At end of BGE, young people have reached a level of attainment at a higher level of skills and understanding than before – this allows the progressive building of skills for lifelong learning
- Learner at the centre
- Pre-CfE pace was uneven – 2 year course for S-Grade and 2 term dash for Higher
- Learning starts a long time before the exam – we want to encourage independence rather than reliance, not preparing through lots of past papers but pupils truly understanding what they are learning
- Highest attaining young people wanted more time at Higher
- Converting lower level qualifications into higher level qualifications means less interest in the lower level qualifications
- Positive evidence for Higher over S4/5 so far
- Genuine Senior Phase will increase opportunities for relevant work experience
- National Performance data – focuses on what learners leave with, do they sustain their positive destination
- Units are equally valuable
- Courses don't have to take a year
- Curriculum must be for all – flexible progression routes must be available
- What are the needs of the young people in the local community?
- Higher attaining young people will leave with more Highers than ever before!

Key Concerns

6 subjects in S4 narrows curriculum too soon

- more breadth in S3
- deeper learning in S4
- more rigour in S6

6 subjects narrows choice for Higher

- flexibility must be built into pathway
- ability to pick up a Higher later on
- prior attainment taken into account

6 subjects in S4 will disadvantage application to university

- all universities have CfE statements reflecting changing landscape
- contact universities directly with specific questions
- English universities will make offers based on Advanced Highers only
- wider attributes beyond academic success count for much

Why not 7 subjects?

- yet to see a school delivering a BGE fully with more than 6 subjects
- time allocation (20 mins extra per week) does not improve quality of learning experience
- National 5 qualifications are more challenging than Standard Grade

ELC picture - number of subjects in S4

- 2 schools doing 7 but moving to 6, 2 schools doing 6, one school choice of 6 or 7 (DN)

Low uptake for “non-academic” subjects will mean they no longer exist

- S4/5/6 together could address some of those concerns
- other schools have not reported that this is the case

What kind of educational principle has reduction of choice at its core?

- We are following principles of Curriculum for Excellence
- It's not about what learners can achieve in S4 but what they achieve across the whole piece S4-S5-S6

The recent Parent Survey made it clear that two thirds of parents are very concerned...

- The survey took place before this information evening where concerns have been directly addressed

Employers don't understand the qualifications...

- employers do understand the value of skills and attributes (CM)

- SCQF framework has been simplified so that SCQF 3 is National 3, SCQF 4 is National 4 etc. (CM)
- Local employer commented that he would rather employ someone with 8 National 5 qualifications than 6 (*NB: Current pathway for a pupil gaining all Credit/National 5 awards in their subjects would be into Highers in S5 and then onto further or higher education*)

What does the graph (shown by HMIE) refer to exactly?

- It refers to pace of learning and teaching and the need for constant challenge throughout secondary education (CM)
- Parent commented that the graph seemed to indicate a more radical idea than 6,7,8 subjects (CM)
- Schools need to change – we need to produce rounded individuals (as is currently the case in Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand) (CM)

Concerned about losing subjects and skills in S3

- Parent commented that he can speak French and is glad he studied History and had the opportunity to do so
- Scottish Government allow schools to do different things – we have explored different options and made the decision
- Flexibility needs to be built in to meet individual needs

People at age 13 don't know what they want to do – it does come down to quantitative data...then quote from CfE working group report document about BGE (interpreted as S1-S6, not S1-S3)

- BGE is S1-S3 only (DN)
- ELC is a partnership not a dictatorship (DN)

How are you tracking the impact of changes? Monitoring progress?

- At individual pupil level (DN)
- At ELC level – relationship with Education Scotland, HMIE, other teachers, using INSIGHT which will help measure the impact of individual performance (DN)
- 4 hours a week for National 5 courses will benefit our learners when they go on and do Highers – we would not do anything detrimental to our young people

According to the report you kindly made available on the school website, SQA are reducing assessment. Are you making this decision too early? I ask you please to reconsider.

- Hope this has not just seemed as if it is about assessment
- SQA will look at more efficient ways of assessing our young people but won't reduce the volume

No parent wants their child to be under stress. Crashing a Higher is also very stressful for a child. Do you think S4 pupils would work comfortably with S6 pupils?

- individual needs would be considered

- prior attainment would be considered
- pupils from different year groups already have opportunities to work together in activities outside the classroom; works well

North Berwick is an affluent area with parents with greater aspirations than some. Can we please have 8 National 5s in S4 for some pupils?

- the decision to go with 6 is what we're going with

Universities want 5 Highers by the end of S5 – does this mean some will do Higher in S4?

- 6 Highers over 2 years could be a possibility (CM)
- schools who are doing that are on track to achieve well (CM)
- could this be an advantage? (CM)

Some pupils are ignoring 2 columns of their subjects in S3 because they are not interested in them.

- entitlement to BGE

Concluding remarks:

- School is very aware of concerns but this is what we are going with
- We no need to widen our thinking beyond S4
- 2 year Highers a possibility to be explored
- bypassing Nationals to be explored
- S4/5/6 together to be considered
- Info evenings for each year group/ Parent Focus groups

NB: DN = Darrin Nightingale, Head of Education, East Lothian Council

CM = Carol McDonald, HMI

Other concerns addressed and questions answered by Lauren Rodger, Head Teacher