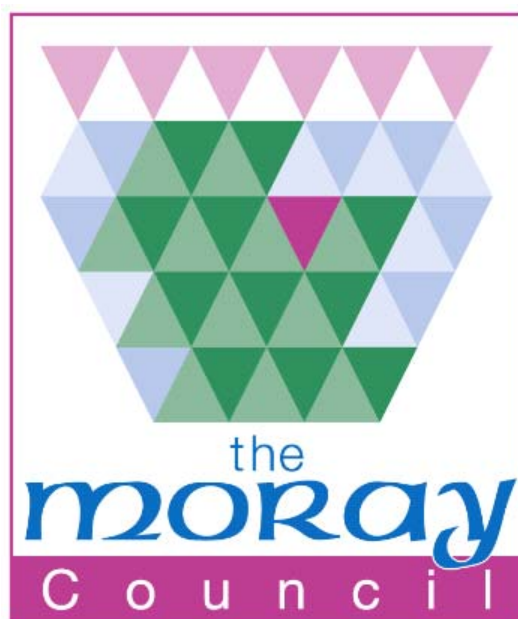


CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE



MORAY LNCT

Questions Asked by Teachers - September 2009 -

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

learning to live
living to learn



**THE MORAY COUNCIL
LOCAL NEGOTIATING
COMMITTEE FOR TEACHERS**

Teachers' Side Joint Secretary

Eileen Morrison
Suite 015 Beechbrae Education Centre
Duffus Road
Elgin IV30 4NP
Tel: 01343 557942 Fax: 01343 544209
Mob: 07811 347905
Email: eileen.morrison@moray-edunet.gov.uk

George Sinclair
Head of Educational Resource Services
The Moray Council
High Street
Elgin IV30 1BX
Tel: 01343 563519
Email: george.sinclair@moray.gov.uk

14 September 2009

Dear Colleague

Clearly, there are still many questions in relation to Curriculum for Excellence [CfE] which cannot yet be answered at either school or authority level. Session 2008-2009 did see the emergence of greater clarity on a number of the issues but there are still uncertainties. In discussions within the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers [LNCT], it was felt that certain aspects appeared to be clear at authority level but that this clarity was not shared by teachers in the classroom. As a result, it was agreed that teacher representatives on the LNCT would liaise with colleagues across Moray and collate the key questions to which teachers still sought answers.

This document is an attempt by the LNCT to answer a number of those questions. The answers given should be seen as "the state of play" as far as the LNCT is concerned as, clearly, we are still awaiting further national guidance in a number of areas.

You will see that while most of the questions have a single agreed response, others have a "management side view" with a separate "teachers' side" comment. We trust that this will not create confusion. It was thought to be important that, where there are still different views within the LNCT, these should be openly acknowledged. We feel the presentation of the current different perspectives reflected in this document serves to demonstrate our genuinely open and collegiate approach to our work.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

Inspire

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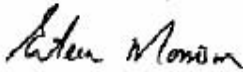
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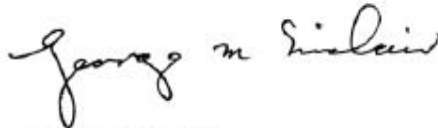
Improve

If considered helpful, the LNCT may produce updated responses or indeed responses to new questions in the future. In the meantime, we would ask that Headteachers ensure that all teaching staff are made aware of, and have easy access to, this document which is also available on the intranet under CfE.

This is an LNCT document, responding to specific questions from teachers. However, we realise that the questions and answers may be of value to a wider audience and so the document can be shared as considered appropriate.



Eileen Morrison
Teachers' Side Joint Secretary



George Sinclair
Head of Educational Development Services



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

Inspire

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Include

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Improve

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE –QUESTIONS ASKED BY TEACHERS

Section 1 - General Issues

Q1 “I walk into a CfE era classroom. What do I see differently from what I see now?”

A1 In some cases you would not expect to see much difference. It is anticipated that you would see AifL embedded and therefore children taking responsibility for their own learning, frequent use of group work so that children can learn from each other (critical skills/cooperative learning) and children being challenged by higher order thinking. You would see clear evidence of challenge and enjoyment. Therefore, as much of this goes on in classrooms now, you can expect this good practice to continue, and to develop.

Q2 “Can we get a timeline for key stages of this development?”

A2 The nationally produced draft timeline is with all headteachers. In Moray, you will also find on the intranet under ‘CfE’ the ‘Initial Rubric for Implementation’ and another document entitled ‘Prioritising Within CfE 2009/10’. These documents are designed to help schools assess their own position against aspects of CfE and enable them to decide their priorities from a knowledge of the key authority priorities. The idea of a Moray timeline has been considered and may yet be produced.

Q3 “What funding will be available to support CfE developments in Moray given the £500 million budget cuts for Scotland as a whole?”

“There appears to be a big emphasis on more costly ‘experiences’ such as visits, working outwith the school etc. How will this be funded?”

A3 Management View

The financial position nationally is well known and it has to be assumed that there will be little, if any, additional money made available. However, in Moray we intend to use the funding we do have to provide financial support towards CPD related to pedagogy.

We don't know which particular experiences and outcomes are being referred to in the second question but, where it is necessary for children to undertake work outwith the school, then three aspects should be considered:-

- What is already happening in the school year that could address the experiences and outcomes? Perhaps an existing P6/7 trip largely addresses the need but in the past the trip has been for another purpose.
- What is there in the immediate school environment which would meet the requirements of the experiences and outcomes? It has to be remembered that the experiences and outcomes have been written for the whole of Scotland and so it is highly likely that the environments round our schools, or certainly within a short distance, will provide suitable learning experiences.
- Can we ensure that any visit will meet the requirements of a number of experiences; perhaps for several departments in a secondary school i.e. can one input achieve a number of outputs?

Teachers' Side View

The funding issue is a key point for teachers and LNCT Teacher Representatives are very concerned indeed about the impact this is already having on schools. The most pressing resource need is time for teachers to plan, collaborate and prepare. This requires additional funding. Representations continue to be made on this at all levels. In the absence of additional funding being made available, it is critical that teachers in schools, including management, stick to the developments and timings as set out in 35 Hour Working Time Agreements. Teachers should not be taking on additional workload to compensate for funding shortfalls.

Q4 “When are we going to know what assessment and reporting will look like?”

A4 We will have a better idea later this year. Building the Curriculum 5 will look specifically at assessment and reporting. Also, twelve local authorities have been piloting work on recognising wider-achievement and their work is due to be released towards the end of the year. We already know that AifL is seen as core to CfE and there is an ongoing commitment to work to embed these fundamental approaches in our schools. It is anticipated that our work with the Tapestry Partnership will have a significant impact in this area. There is a small working group led by Gordon Barron of West End Primary School looking at reporting. It is anticipated that we will wish to make use of GLOW in any finally agreed reporting system. In terms of summative assessment the SQA has said publicly that it will be amending assessment so that it genuinely reflects CfE.

Q5 “What are the different groups which meet in Moray about CfE? Who are on the groups? What is the role of the groups? Is Moray funding cover for attending these groups?”

“What is the role of the ASG groups and how are they supposed to feedback and consult with the wider teaching staff?”

“Could the minutes of these groups be put on the intranet so that we know what is happening?”

A5 The most recent outline of the approach in Moray is given in the ‘Implementation Strategy Update – April 2009’, which is on the intranet. The current membership is on the intranet under CfE – CfE Groups Members Contact Details.

The representatives of the ASG group are expected to feedback as appropriate – the secondary representatives within their own school and the primary representatives to the other headteachers in the ASG. They have not been asked to consult others but are frequently asked for their own opinion on e.g. draft documents, ideas for in-service, etc.

The minutes of the ‘CfE Strategy Group’ and ‘ASG CfE Representative Group’ are published, once approved, on the intranet.

Cover is only given for class-committed headteachers to attend these meetings. Where internal cover can be organised it is expected that this is what happens. Central budgets are extremely limited and support has to be focused on situations where cover has to be brought in to a school.

Q6 “When will Moray stop asking schools for 5-14 data?”

A6 Several points need to be made here. There is a clear commitment in Moray to move away from 5-14 reporting once teaching staff have had time to get familiar with the Experiences and Outcomes and have had the opportunity to work on the advice which will be given in Building the Curriculum 5. This will mean staff having the opportunity to work with each other to compare standards so that individual teachers are confident in their assessment and that headteachers, and the authority, can be assured from self-evaluation processes that children are making appropriate progress. In the meantime, for 2009/10, reporting will continue to be in terms of 5-14 to ensure our teachers and schools have the time to come to terms with CfE assessment and reporting.

In addition, it has to be remembered that 5-14 data is also collected for reasons external to schools. Firstly, it helps officers to discuss trends with schools in order to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. Secondly, it is reported to Elected Members, who take a keen interest in the performance of schools. Under CfE there will remain a need for both although the nature of the information will almost certainly change. CfE levels are certainly not designed for ‘level tests’ and so we will need to work out:-

- How can we in Moray identify trends across schools?
- How can we provide Elected Members with information?

As far as we are aware other authorities are involved in similar considerations and the picture nationally would seem to be that the vast majority of authorities intend collecting the 5-14 data in 2009/10. The publication of Building the Curriculum 5 may help in this respect.

Additional Comment from the Teachers’ Side

We understand that some authorities have now moved away from collection of this data and we view it to be an essential step for confirming commitment to the principles of CfE. This continues to be a campaigning issue for teachers.

Q7 “Where is the development time going to come from for teachers to deliver CfE?”

A7 It is important to bear in mind a few points relating to this:-

- the work on-going in Moray schools over the past few years round AifL, critical skills, literacy, numeracy, enterprise, etc is all part of CfE and so our staff are not starting from scratch on this – CfE builds on what is already in place and staff development over the years should mean that most colleagues are well placed to move ahead with CfE.
- CfE is not a short-term change and so the position reached in August 2010 will be different from 2016. This is a long term development.

- We see isolation (of staff or schools) as a major danger here. It is important that staff work together to support, develop and challenge each other.
- Clearly it will be important to make good use of the time that is available and schools will need to ensure a CfE focus to their work. However, time is finite and it would be very unwise to pretend that there will not be pressures on time. Therefore, schools and teachers will absolutely need to prioritise, support each other, build on what is already good and be prepared to defer work that might be useful but isn't absolutely needed.

The Teachers' Side would add:-

While welcoming the above, we feel that the time required for fulfilling the aspirations of CfE, in terms of the cross-curricular expectations in particular, is often hugely underestimated by management in schools. Teachers must be properly consulted on priorities for development and adequate time clearly identified prior to commitments being made and school plans fixed.

Q8 “We are still very confused and concerned about what it is we are being asked to deliver. What exactly will a fully implemented ‘CfE school’ look like? We don’t know what we are aiming for.”

A8 CfE is different from previous changes in Scottish education. As opposed to, for example, Standard Grade, which was a new course and where huge numbers of documents and worksheets were made available, CfE starts with key principles which should then be reflected in the curriculum. There has also been a greater attempt to engage the profession in the implementation. While we know that the final aim is to have young people who are successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, there are uncertainties and ambiguities to be worked through. What we do know is that all our work on methodology, literacy and numeracy, health and well-being, enterprise, international education, etc, has been entirely appropriate as it fits the outcomes expected i.e. young people who have a range of skills and knowledge and are flexible and can think their way through a variety of contexts. The questioning (or coaching) skills of staff will support this. Therefore, we may not ‘know’ what a CfE school will ‘look like’ but we do know that the staff who have engaged in developments in Moray over the past few years are very well placed. We also have to appreciate that there will not be a ‘look like’ for CfE but a range of experiences for children and young people.

Section 2 - Primary Issues

Q1 “What is forward planning for CfE going to look like for a primary teacher?”

A1 This was raised at a meeting of the ASG CfE Representatives and subsequently formed the focus of an afternoon session for primary headteachers. As a result of this work, it would seem that there is little need to change our policy but a need to give some guidance/advice on formats. A small group led by Irene Ross is looking at this. Whatever the outcome, it will be vital that planning generates no more workload than at present and is seen in the context of schools' overall 35 hour working time agreement. As part of this, it is likely that a few schools will be involved in piloting planning formats in 2009/10.

Q2 “More and more seems to be expected of primary education. Can you explain how CfE is supposed to ‘de-clutter’ the curriculum?”

A2 In recent times the implementation of many apparently disparate initiatives has been asked of schools. CfE gives us the opportunity to bring greater coherence to our work. A CfE curriculum will be designed to encompass all planned experiences and learning. As such, it can act as an umbrella for enterprise, citizenship, health promotion, eco schools and other similar activities. It will be important that teachers and schools identify learning contexts through which a number of outcomes or experiences can be addressed at one time thus giving the opportunity to provide a more coherent and de-cluttered curriculum.

Teachers' Side would Add

While not disagreeing with the answer given above, we feel again that it is very easy to underestimate the time required for the planning, preparation and meaningful evaluation of learning through such “experiences.”

Q3 “What will the authority’s expectations be in terms of recording the progress of individual pupils?”

A3 As yet we do not know. See the answer to question 4 of ‘General Issues’. However, within the classroom the use of AifL will be of great importance in assessing progress and next steps in learning. Further national guidance is expected on this.

Q4 “Our Headteacher wants developments in a whole number of areas because she thinks we are due an inspection. What can we do?”

A4 Inspections are important and publicly reported. However, we do things for the children and young people in our schools and not for HMle. All schools in Moray should be using the Improvement Planning process to decide and agree on development work based on their self-evaluation of needs and honouring working time agreements.

Section 3 - Secondary Issues

Q1 “Why have secondary schools been asked to provide a S1-S3 curriculum model now when further national exemplification and guidance is going to be produced?”

A1 This was asked for as one of the big imponderables which was holding back development in our secondary schools. The other major question, S4-6 assessment, we cannot address in Moray but we could start work on structures. We believed it was desirable to give all teachers in Moray an extended time to engage in internal debate on structures supported by inputs from other schools in the authority. Through this process, we anticipate a more informed design will result in our schools. In addition, Moray is represented on the national group working on exemplification and so there is sufficient awareness of the developing national position on this matter to be satisfied that the work done here will be appropriate both in terms of the national guidance and the needs of our schools.

Finally, the authority has responded to concerns about the timescale for this work and postponed the submission of draft plans until October. If necessary, this will be reviewed further if our schools consider it appropriate to do so.

Q2 “What guidance/support will be available to secondary teachers/departments trying to integrate new courses with current courses?”

“What specialist support/specialist staff development will be available to assist with implementation of new courses?”

A2 Teachers in our schools know their own courses and so they will need to take a large part of the responsibility for integrating the new into the existing. However:-

- Although some content has changed under CfE it will be vital to use what already exists. Generating new materials must be kept to a minimum and the focus given to methodology.
- Existing skills in AifL, critical skills/cooperative learning, enterprise, literacy and numeracy will support integration.
- Moray continues to offer training on methodology and there will be additional input, through our work with The Tapestry Partnership, to support teachers in further developing methodology. We now have an ASG structure in place to support enterprise in our schools. Courses continue to be available in developing literacy and numeracy.
- Our subject groups are a support mechanism for principal teachers in secondary schools.
- Nationally, advice is being made available to support the implementation of experiences and outcomes.
- David Binney is undertaking work specific to science.

CfE should be about building on good practice and not just swapping one course for another, but it is recognised there is a substantial need for time and adequate CPD to support this development. It is also really important that, to deal with potential workload issues, developments will need to be prioritised with realistic timescales agreed through the SIP and 35 Hour Working Time Agreement.

Q3 “How can I make plans for S1-3 in my subject area without knowing what S4-6 courses are going to look like?”

A3 Those working nationally on S4-6 are having to take the earlier levels into account. The official line is that the new examinations should reflect the approach adopted in earlier years so that working with the experiences and outcomes at this time will ensure preparation for later assessments. We must, therefore, anticipate and expect that there will be a seamless progression from the levels already published. In addition, we must remember that many of the changes in S1-3 will be in the area of methodology rather than content and will be designed to develop deeper understanding of what you teach and an ability in the children and young people to transfer skills and knowledge gained in your subject to other areas of learning. This approach will support developments in S4-6.

Already there are some positive signs from those working nationally in that, for example, considerable time was spent examining the experiences and outcomes across all curricular areas to ensure coherence.

Q4 “We currently work within a shared curriculum framework which makes transfer arrangements for pupils between schools easier i.e. we have a shared understanding of levels, etc. Surely individual school programmes and vague progression criteria will make for much less accurate information on transfer?”

A4 Not necessarily as the progression should be clearer and, while contexts for learning may differ, the skills and attitudes developed in children should be more readily transferrable. If work on the role of children in target-setting is developed then again this should help any move. Also, we have to remember that experiences and outcomes are not in themselves assessment criteria and our reporting and assessment procedures, to be revised following the publication of Building the Curriculum 5, will further assist with information on transfer. Finally, we have to accept that the present situation is not exactly a consistent one for children who transfer schools.

Q5 “In a secondary school, whose responsibility is it to oversee and assess the progress of individual pupils in Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Well-being?”

A5 There is likely to be some variation across our schools. At least initially, we would anticipate a member of the Senior Management Team having the overview with a member of staff and/or a committee taking these areas forward. For literacy and numeracy, staff on such a committee may be from the English or Mathematics departments but it would be an expectation that the bulk of staff involved would be from other departments. Certainly it is not expected that this role be taken by the principal teachers of English/Mathematics.

Q6 “What is the position of discrete PSE provision in light of CfE?”

A6 Personal Support is fundamental to CfE. While this goes further than PSE there is nevertheless this key requirement which will need to be available to every young person. Pages 17/18 of Building the Curriculum 3 gives further information on this. In addition, CfE intends to provide progression in learning, remove barriers and develop the four capacities in all young people. It would seem to us that the position of PSE is secure in all these respects.

Q7 “As a specialist secondary teacher with many years of successfully teaching my own subject I have real anxieties and uncertainties about what I am being asked to do. Where can I find out exactly what it is I have to do differently and where can I access the support I know I will need in order to meet what I fear are the expectations?”

A7 It is natural to be anxious about change. The job of a teacher is changing in that a key role is now seen to be the development in children and young people of a lifelong learning capacity. However, CfE is not about other people telling you ‘exactly’ what to do. You are the experienced professional. You will know your subject and the needs of the young people in your classes. With your colleagues, you will have greater freedom to address those needs within the guidelines of the experiences and outcomes, always referring back to the capacities and principles for curriculum design. Things will be different in your classroom but it needs to be clear that there are no expectations of changes of an immediately ‘transformational nature’ but rather a planned and progressive development of more effective teaching and learning. In this, classroom teachers will be the key players and able to build on the CPD undertaken over the past few years which has helped to focus on methodology and how children learn. Support for individual subjects will remain important and there will be increased collaborative work between subject areas, but the key aspect will be the development of more effective teaching and relevant learning.