

HERMITAGE ACADEMY CURRICULUM REVIEW

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Community Services Committee of the progress in taking forward the action plan arising from the internal review of the senior phase curriculum at Hermitage Academy which was conducted during August to November 2015.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Service Committee:

- a Note the progress achieved by Hermitage Academy, supported by Education Services in taking forward the key actions arising from the internal review of the senior phase curriculum at Hermitage Academy, and
- b Note that a further progress report will be presented to a future Community Services Committee meeting.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

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4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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5.0 BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Hermitage Academy, similar to all Scottish Schools introduced their senior phase curriculum model with the key aims of supporting all learners to:

- Achieve their potential
- Experience success
- And be well prepared for life beyond school.

The approach implemented by Hermitage Academy offers a two year course with presentation in external examinations at Higher at the end of fifth year for the majority of young people. This approach embraces the key principles of Curriculum for Excellence, aiming to achieve the highest possible outcomes for all young people. Only a small number of schools in Scotland currently apply a similar framework.

In August 2015, Hermitage Academy, similar to all schools received the examination results for all pupils presented as part of the 2014/2015

examination diet. While a number of young people achieved successful outcomes, particularly in Higher grade examinations, for a significant number of young people their individual examination outcomes were less positive.

A summary briefing paper outlining the background to the Hermitage Academy curriculum framework, the examination outcomes and future areas for consideration was provided for information to local elected members (5th August 2015) and to assist in responding to constituent enquiries.

Following the examination results a number of concerns were raised by parents about the curriculum policy, examination outcomes, the school's presentation policy and consultation and engagement with parents. In addition, a number of parental letters were received highlighting their concerns about what the current framework meant for their children. These concerns were followed by questions and enquiries from local elected members as well as national politicians. In addition several media enquiries were received.

Advice was given either by the school or the Education Authority to confirm that their concerns would be considered in the course of the on-going review and that they would receive a response and assurance following the completion of the review.

At this time Education Services engaged with Hermitage Academy as part of the routine programme of support and challenge with all schools. Through this engagement, it was agreed that a fuller review of the curricular model and its impact would be undertaken jointly by the school and the Education Service.

- 5.2 At the Council meeting of 22 October 2015 the Council:
- Noted the concerns expressed about the current curricular model (framework) in place at Hermitage Academy and the possible impact on the 2015 academic results for the school;
 - Reaffirmed that the education of our children and young people is a key priority for the Council;
 - Noted that the Council's Education Service has commenced a review of the curricular model (framework) in conjunction with the Hermitage Academy Senior Leadership Team following the publication of the first year of results;
 - Agreed that the review will consult staff, parents and pupils with immediate effect to ensure their views are reflected in the evaluation and its outcome;
 - Noted that the design of a curricular model (framework) for schools, firmly embedded in the Curriculum for Excellence, is an operational matter based on education professional judgement;
 - Noted that it would be inappropriate for the council to direct the design of a school curriculum which is not based on a

professional evaluation and prior to the conclusion of the current review;

- Agreed that any changes to the curricular model (framework) at Hermitage Academy should take account of the needs of all pupils at the school, including those currently in the senior phase;
- Endorsed the view of the Education Service that any critical adjustments found to be necessary during the review will be implemented immediately to minimise potential disruption to learners;
- Agreed that regular updates on the ongoing review, and any resulting changes to the curriculum model, are reported to the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee and the Community Services Committee, and
- Agreed that any policy implications or changes required as a consequence of the review were reported to the Community Services Committee and Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

- 5.3 Following the October Council meeting, Education Services continued to progress the comprehensive review of the senior phase curriculum framework jointly with Hermitage Academy.

As the Hermitage Academy curriculum framework was different in structure to that of other Argyll and Bute secondary schools, the engagement included a review of the senior phase curriculum in terms of both processes and outcomes.

The principal aim of the review was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the current senior phase curriculum framework in meeting the needs of all of the young people attending Hermitage Academy.

To assess this impact a number of review activities were taken forward including:

- Analysis of a wide range of background information including: scrutiny of examination statistics, approaches to whole school and departmental tracking and monitoring: including the effectiveness of the school's supporting learners programme "*/time*", and review of subject timetabling arrangements;
- A review of current departmental tracking and monitoring of individual pupil progress;
- Issue of questionnaires to all parents/carers, pupils and staff of Hermitage Academy. Full analysis of the questionnaire responses;
- Facilitation of a range of opt in focus groups for parents/carers, pupils, staff and pupils;
- Analysis of responses from all focus groups;
- Consideration of individual submissions by parents/carers;
- Participation in one to one meetings, as requested by individual staff members;

- Consideration of documentation provided at an initial meeting facilitated by the Parent Council;
- Review of the effectiveness of approaches to engagement and communication between the school and parents;
- Review of the documentation providing information on the individual learning experiences of young people, and
- Meetings with a number of principal teachers.

5.4 Following the initial field work phase of the curriculum review. Education Scotland was invited by the Council's Education Service to join the review team to contribute challenge, knowledge and advice to the Council's internal review of the senior phase curriculum at Hermitage Academy. This engagement included a commitment to provide on-going support to both the local authority and the school in order to offer an independent perspective, as well as advice around best practice, parental engagement and assessment.

5.5 Key themes identified within the Curriculum Review

Upon completion of the curriculum review, findings in relation to four key themes were agreed by members of the review team. These were:

1. Overall effectiveness of the current curriculum framework (model), including enhancement courses in meeting the needs of all young people;
2. Effectiveness and impact of whole school approaches to tracking and monitoring learners' progress;
3. Effectiveness of approaches to engagement and communication with key stakeholders; and
4. Evaluation of the school presentation policy and its impact on learners.

The key messages and key actions identified at the conclusion of the review were reported to Community Services Committee on 10 December 2016, a copy of which is contained at Appendix 1 of this report.

5.6 Following the conclusion of the Hermitage Academy curriculum review the team concluded that the current curriculum design should be amended and improved to ensure it effectively meets the needs of all young people.

Education Services and Hermitage Academy jointly prepared an action plan to address the identified areas for improvement.

Education Services continue to engage with Hermitage Academy to ensure the delivery of these actions, as well as to provide on-going challenge and support. A programme of visits have taken place since December 2015, during which Education Services has monitored the progress of the school in taking forward the key components of the action plan, provided ongoing advice, support and challenge, engaged

with the newly formed Parent Council and responded to parental questions or enquiries.

A further letter was prepared and issued to all Hermitage Academy parents (4 December 2015) outlining the outcome of the review and confirming proposed actions.

Support for pupils currently studying in the senior phase has continued to be routinely reviewed to ensure the needs of learners are met. With regular communication and engagement with parents/carers throughout the process.

- 5.7 On the 17th/18th March 2106 colleagues from Education Scotland revisited the school to work with us to evaluate progress and the changes that have been made in the school since the initial Local Authority Review.

At the conclusion of this visit we jointly agreed that a number of positive changes have been made across the Senior Phase Curriculum to further support young people. The, schools senior leadership team, teachers and members of the Education Service have worked very hard to implement a wide range of changes, in addition to their on-going work, within a short timescale. These are leading to improvement for young people. For example,

- The tracking and monitoring of young people's progress from S4-S6 is now providing more information to better inform pupils and parents about their progress;
- The SQA presentation policy has been reviewed to increase its flexibility for young people;
- The training sessions to support the Parent Council and their roles and responsibilities in school improvement are complete;
- The identification of young people who are at risk of under-achieving is better;
- The range of interventions in place to address under-achievement has increased and improved, and
- A curriculum framework which allows young people to specialise in their third year has been developed.

We also recognised that there is further work to be completed and agreed continued development of key areas including;

- Monitoring and evaluating the changes to the curriculum regularly and rigorously to ensure that they provide effective progression pathways for young people;
- Improving further the communication and engagement with parents, staff and young people;
- Monitoring and evaluate the quality and impact of the interventions to address under-achievement;

- Reviewing further i-time to ensure it is having a positive impact on young people's learning;
- Continue to work with staff to ensure that the assessment information from S1 to S6 is robust and founded on a clear understanding of standards;
- Develop further all staff's understanding of young people's progress towards qualifications;
- Monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of the interventions to address under-achievement, and
- Improve the use of social media to celebrate young peoples' success.

5.8 Parents and young people noted their appreciation of the different ways in which teachers are supporting their learning. For example, through the provision of supported study at lunchtime, after the end of the school day and through the spring holiday break.

5.9 Letters have been prepared by both Education Services and Education Scotland for distribution to parents confirming the improving areas and areas which were agreed to continue to improve on. Copies of each letter are included at Appendices 2 and 3 for information and are also available on both the school and Education Scotland websites.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The School, supported by the Education Service is making steady progress in addressing the main points for action arising from the Senior Phase Curriculum review.

6.2 The Authority will continue to work with the school to monitor and review the progress in achieving the remaining areas for improvement contained within the Action Plan. With ongoing progress updates shared with parents over the coming months.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1	Policy	The outcome of the curriculum review may result in policy implications.
7.2	Financial	None.
7.3	Legal	The Council meets its duties in terms of the Education Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000.
7.4	HR	None.
7.5	Equalities	None.
7.6	Risk	There are risks to the Council in terms of reputation and operational risks.

7.7 Customer Service None.

Executive Director of Community Services

Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning, Councillor R Colville

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Key Messages and Key Actions
- Appendix 2: Education Service's letter of 10 May 2016
- Appendix 3: Education Scotland letter of 10 May 2016

COMMUNITY SERVICES: EDUCATION

HERMITAGE ACADEMY REVIEW



Key Messages

Overall effectiveness of the current curriculum framework (model), including enhancement courses in meeting the needs of all learners:

- The current curriculum framework is resulting in a range of positive outcomes for some learners.
- In 2015, Attainment by the end of S5 at Higher (SCQF level 6) has increased since 2014 and is now in line with virtual comparators (the virtual comparator is compiled from the results of pupils across Scotland and is built to reflect the same socio economic/ demographic profile as Hermitage);
- Some young people are also achieving certification through the enhancement courses. For example, community sports leadership awards, sociology and positive destination;
- In 2015, Attainment at National 3, 4 and 5 is generally significantly below virtual comparators; and
- Enhancement courses are perceived, by some, as not adding sufficient value for the time commitment.

Effectiveness and impact of whole school approaches to tracking and monitoring learners progress:

- There is a range of established procedures and processes in place to track and monitor outcomes for learners this includes the use of “*I-time*” and targeted support for young people;
- Young people, parents and staff do not have a shared understanding of the progress individual young people are making;
- Target and presentation levels are not sufficiently clear for all young people and their parents;
- The reliability and consistency of assessment information requires to be improved; and
- A strategic overview of pupil progress across subjects, courses and levels is not sufficiently well developed to lead to improved outcomes.

Effectiveness of approaches to engagement and communication with key stakeholders:

- A broad range of approaches is used by the school to engage effectively with pupils, parents and staff. This includes Parents Evenings, Open Night, P7 Information Evening;
- Further work is required to improve engagement and communication with pupils and staff; and
- Parents of the current S6 feel that they have been well-informed about the

curriculum model. However, overall staff, pupils and parents are not sufficiently clear about the current curriculum framework. In particular there is a notable lack of clarity about the two year course versus the two year Higher.

Evaluation of the school presentation policy and its impact on learners:

- Hermitage Academy's current presentation policy has resulted in a high level of attainment for many pupils. However for a significant number of young people the current framework did not fully meet their needs.

Key Actions

A number of key actions have been identified to securing improvement in outcomes for all young people attending Hermitage Academy. These include making changes to the current framework :

- Apply greater flexibility in the delivery of the current curricular pathways to improve further the outcomes for all young people. This should include increasing the range of opportunities for one and two years pathways to certification;
- Immediately implement changes to the current delivery of enhancement courses to maximise opportunities for all young people to attain highly;
- Review individual pupil progress across all subjects to ensure pupils are achieving at the appropriate level;
- Build on the recent review of Broad General Education (BGE) to ensure pupils have appropriate opportunities for specialisation (ensuring young people have a suitably broad experience in the BGE to support their subject choices in the senior phase);
- Develop further the recently revised processes in the senior phase for tracking and monitoring to inform appropriate and timely interventions to help secure improvements in attainment for all young people;
- Work with parents, staff and pupils to develop a shared understanding of progress (assessment, working grades, target grades, presentation levels);
- Ensure effective systems are in place to confirm the reliability and consistency of assessment information; and
- Develop further the school's strategic overview of pupil progress across subjects and courses.

Communicating the action planning to secure improvement:

- A letter illustrating the findings of the curriculum review will be prepared and issued to all parents, noting the comments of Education Scotland (see Appendix 4);
- Further discussions will be taken forward between the school, Education Services and the recently elected Parent Council to share the findings of the review and subsequent actions;
- Individual pupil and family engagement for all S4 and S5 pupils will be offered; and
- A further presentation to the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee to share information on the review.