Response from Aileen Goodall

Please find below my personal thoughts on the Wood report based on my experiences of working with 16-19 year old young people, both during and post-secondary school covering a rural and remote geographical area - Argyll and Bute.

- if the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most;
Concerned from what I have seen to date in those pilot programmes moving forward foundation apprenticeships that these courses will be swamped by academic young people who are already well catered for in the 'traditional secondary senior phase ' currently on offer under CfE. Also am concerned that the media hasn't yet embraced the value of apprenticeship programme training - not seen as artisan, highly skilled and in turn highly valued the way our European neighbours do - this impacts on parents/carers views, most are very cautious about allowing their young people to become involved in this 'alternative progression pathway'.

- the report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided;
In our rural and remote geographical area it is almost impossible for two secondary schools to work together in offering vocational content to senior phase pupils. This creates huge issues in ensuring we have adequate numbers to meet the minimum funding requirements set by our local college provider.

We have falling school rolls, very little vocational workshop facilities available through local colleges or training providers and already rely on local employers to allow us to access their facilities in order for pupils to gain access to practical spaces for Skills for Work and related qualifications.

Having examined the foundation apprenticeship course content for engineering we would need to remove pupils following this route from their peers if they are to have the necessary practical and study time to complete the course. Due to rural and remote geography we wouldn't be able to replicate the West Lothian model whereby pupils follow a number of timetable national 4/5 classes and complete the foundations courses through involvement in evening and weekend classes - our transport infrastructure wouldn't support such options.

- whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”;

- whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome;
Based on my experience it would have been great for rural and remote geography to have been included as part of the inequalities issue - our local authority area has a falling and
ageing population (yet this is not reflected in the Skills Improvement Plan produced for the Highlands and Islands area). We have widespread dispersed communities that currently need to travel for an hour in order to access their closest town; weak broadband connectivity preventing access to online learning and working from home opportunities and a reliance on holding down a number of part-time/seasonal employment opportunities with little chance of career progression and development.

- whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements);

To truly embrace the recommendations and ensure cognisance is taken of all partners needs this agenda needs to be led by a 'lay' person with an understanding of education - school/business/community tripartite way of working requires an individual to be available to all parties rather than the current position whereby this agenda sits as part of a promoted teacher post and they have 2 periods a week designated for delivering the recommendations. Currently our schools have the upper hand in dictating timetable/holidays and partner agencies have to fall into line with these rather than there being the flexibility and consistency required to allow young people to be offered the best programme to allow the to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required to succeed in the world of work.

- What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:
  - teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”); - currently developing subject teachers knowledge and understanding of the true labour market picture as opposed to tabloid newspaper headlines. All secondary staff should know what the school leaver destination rates/routes are for their pupils and how their subject can support this outcome - which is really what education should be preparing young people for - to take their place in society and the workforce and make the best contribution they can through having excellent knowledge understanding of skills for learning, life AND work. as opposed to what subject teachers currently think which us they are preparing young people to pass the relevant examination in their subject area - doesn't necessarily allow young person to make a positive and sustained post school transition. No teacher should be allowed to go straight from school to university to teacher training institution and then back to school - all teachers should have spent time in the world of work that the rest of society inhabits. Would help to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world of work and employability skills.
  - closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”). This was already in place in our secondary schools and the majority of our primary establishments through the Determined to Succeed policy. Needs to be refreshed with a focus on employability and strengthen the focus on schools listening to employers and what they need by way of knowledge, understanding and skills from the future work force. For all of this to happen schools will require additional staffing support - as identified earlier - to support moving the agenda forward. Subject staff are exceptionally hard working as they move forward with implementing new Higher qualifications and national 5 awards.

Kind regards
Aileen Goodall