

EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

THE SENIOR PHASE OF SCHOOL: HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE PURSUE THE RIGHT PATHWAY FOR THEM

SUBMISSION FROM Terry Lanagan on behalf of The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)

Recommendation 1: Senior Phase Vocational Pathways

ADES believes that good progress has been made in the implementation of this key recommendation. The range and quality of industry recognised qualifications available in the Senior Phase has increased each year since the launch of the DYW Programme, as has the number of young people who undertake these qualifications. Projected figures for the next two academic years indicate that this expansion in both provision and uptake will continue.

This progress has been achieved through close collaboration and inter-agency working. Schools, local authorities, colleges and employers have worked closely together with national agencies such as Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to overcome significant barriers, including timetabling challenges and misconceptions among some parents and pupils of the value of vocational pathways and qualifications.

Of particular significance has been the introduction of a new qualification – Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs). From a baseline figure of 72 FAs being offered in the pilot year of 2014/15, provision has grown to over 1200 starts in 2017/18 and a projected figure of 2600 across 12 different frameworks in 2018/19. FAs are now part of the Senior Phase offer in all local authorities, all college regions and over 70% of secondary schools.

ADES recognises the importance of continuing to build on this success. Consequently, we will be jointly hosting (with SDS) a national conference on FAs in August 2018. The aim of this conference will be to highlight best and emerging practice and to offer practical solutions to ongoing issues such as timetable challenges, completion rates and employer engagement.

Over the coming years, it will be essential that the various types of vocational qualifications, together with more “traditional” or “academic” qualifications, are seen as a coherent whole, enabling schools to help young people to plan their various journeys through the three years of the Senior Phase, maximising their chances of progressing successfully thereafter to sustained positive destinations in college, university, training or employment. In this regard, ADES welcomes the fact that SDS is currently developing new vocational qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 which will help young people to progress successfully to FA courses at their own pace.

ADES believes that the system is well placed to build on recent successes and to achieve the transformational change over the next few years which was envisioned by the Wood Commission in relation to Senior Phase Vocational Pathways.

Recommendation 2: Preparing Young People for the World of Work

Again, ADES believes that there is evidence of good progress in relation to this recommendation.

My World of Work remains an important digital resource for young people and schools, while the publication in 2015 of three key documents (Careers Education Standards 3-18; Work Placement Standards; and Guidance on School/Employer Partnerships) have provided the system with important tools to ensure that young people are adequately prepared for the world of work. The challenge now is to ensure that the recommendations contained in the three documents are implemented consistently across the country.

There is hard evidence of increased employer engagement with this agenda. In 2016, 21% of employers in Scotland offered work placements to school students, up from only 10% in 2014. More employers are also engaging in a range of other activities with schools and the regional employer-led DYW groups are now all operational, although it is perhaps too early to measure the impact of these groups. A challenge going forward will be to ensure that schools and employers begin to form strategic partnerships, working as equals to deliver high quality provision for young people.

It is important to stress that this recommendation does not only apply to secondary schools. Skills for Work has always been a key component of Curriculum for Excellence and some of the most innovative work in relation to employer engagement can be seen in primary schools and Early Years settings, with, for example, some establishments running week-long DYW events where the curriculum is delivered through the prism of employability, while others offer young people opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Over recent years, because of work led by local authorities and SDS on the DYW agenda, teachers have become more aware of local labour market information, enabling them to provide more localised, relevant careers guidance to young people.

As with Recommendation 1, the work in relation to Recommendation 2 is far from completed and one of the challenges facing the system over the coming years will be to ensure that all young people across Scotland have access to high quality careers guidance, relevant work placement/work experience and meaningful involvement with local employers. However, ADES is confident that the building blocks are in place to ensure that these goals are achieved.

General

ADES remains very committed, not just to the achievement of these two recommendations, but to the DYW agenda as a whole. It is a key aspect of CfE and, if we can successfully deliver on all the DYW recommendations, then Scottish society will have been transformed for the better.

Terry Lanagan, ADES Executive Officer

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