

## CHAPTER 5: MEETING THE ENTITLEMENT

### Context

- 5.1 This chapter outlines the key issues to be addressed in ensuring that each pupil has access to the Entitlement Framework with the choice and flexibility required to meet their needs. A new culture of collaboration and partnership is needed if pupils are to have full access to the Entitlement Framework.

### Choice and Flexibility

- 5.2 All pupils must be aware of the choices of subjects and learning pathways available to them if they are to reach their full potential. Pupils and parents must also be given sound advice to support them in exercising choice. Moreover, exercising well-informed choice should not be a one-off event, recognising that pupils' interests and career orientation may change over time, in line with increasing maturity. Erratic chopping and changing of courses is to be discouraged to avoid an unduly fragmented educational experience, but reasonable opportunities to change courses should be available, especially when it is clear that better choices could have been made at an earlier stage.
- 5.3 Schools should make available through their prospectus, information about the learning pathways available. In a later section, we recommend that CCEA should continue with the development of the Pupil Profile which should be a key document to inform pupil and parental choice about individual pathways which best reflect pupils' needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. This should be supplemented by advice from their schools or other institutions attended.
- 5.4 Towards the end of each school year, in consultation with teachers, pupils and parents should have the opportunity to:
- review their learning pathways/individual components they are following;
  - review their progress; and
  - adjust their pathways/individual components to reflect their maturity and changing needs, aptitudes, interests and career choices.

- 5.5 A more substantive review to help pupils and parents choose future learning pathways should take place during the second term of the final years of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At other times, pupils should have the opportunity to change their pathways or individual components where it is agreed between the pupil/parent and the school(s) that the learning pathway or individual component being followed is not in the pupil's best educational interests.
- 5.6 Whilst every effort should be made to accommodate pupil and parental preferences, it is recognised that choice cannot be entirely unfettered. Choice in any year would have to take account of the demand for courses and the number of places available. For example, there may be a particular local demand which is additional to that which schools would normally be expected to meet. In that situation, school managing authorities would be expected to work together, with the FE sector where appropriate, to seek to accommodate the demand within the locality, subject to considerations of educational and economic viability.
- 5.7 This range of choice, and the facility to match provision more closely with pupil needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations should make a major contribution to encouraging pupils to remain in full-time education beyond the age of compulsory schooling. As course provision becomes more specialised, however, it would be increasingly important to maximise collaboration between schools and other providers to offer the desired choice to the highest standard in a cost-effective way.

## **Meeting Pupil Needs**

- 5.8 As indicated earlier, primacy must be given to meeting the needs of the learner. Each school must provide its pupils with access to a range of learning pathways:
- through a range of appropriate delivery mechanisms, which for most schools will include a level of collaboration with other local providers both in the schools' sector, the FE sector and beyond;
  - incorporating a range of learning approaches; and
  - with appropriate support and information to pupils and parents to enable informed choices to be made.

- 5.9 The school to which a pupil is enrolled should retain responsibility for the pupil throughout the pupil's education even though part of it may be provided in other settings. That responsibility should begin with securing the smooth transition and induction of pupils from primary school to post-primary school; and continue with the school acting as a portal to secure access to the appropriate range of educational opportunities. Similar responsibilities apply for pupils admitted after Key Stage 3 or 4.

## **Partnership**

- 5.10 The core purpose of cooperation and collaboration is to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum breadth, choice and flexibility required by the Entitlement Framework. Regardless of the number and range of institutions available in a particular locality, a much richer and more varied educational provision could be offered, cost-effectively, through much higher levels of cooperation and collaboration with other providers. This is envisaged as a two way process whereby schools should both seek and offer facilities, resources and expertise.
- 5.11 There is a wide spectrum of potential cooperation ranging from curricular links in some subjects through to more formalised arrangements under which, for example, 11-14 schools may be linked to 14-18 or 11-18 schools in order to provide a full range of opportunities for their pupils. The emphasis should be on flexibility arising from locally determined arrangements to meet local wishes, needs and circumstances.
- 5.12 Unlike the Burns recommendation on Collegiates, such partnership would not necessarily require the formation of fixed groupings or consortia of schools. The nature of the cooperation could vary over time and involve providers other than neighbouring schools – for example institutions of further education, training providers or local employers. Adequate planning and clear agreement would be essential in each instance and this should include the management of the collaborative arrangements. Collaboration with other providers should not dilute the responsibility of the school in which the pupil is formally enrolled at year 8 or any subsequent schools. The school would remain responsible for securing provision that meets his or her individual needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations, for guaranteeing a learning pathway through to age 18 and for his or her welfare and safety.

- 5.13 There are some excellent examples of cooperation and collaboration between schools, and a more developed practice of schools securing certain types of provision in conjunction with their local FE institution. However, the practice of school/school and school/FE collaboration needs to become much more widespread and be regarded as the norm rather than the exception. Collaboration with training providers and with business should also be developed. Promoting innovative approaches to collaboration will expand choice and offer new opportunities for pupils and teachers.
- 5.14 The use of ICT/ILT has the potential to make a major contribution to this, whether through distance learning (to minimise travel) or through e-learning, which could make it possible to provide courses for small groups that would not otherwise be viable. Further investment will be needed in the development of these facilities and in the training of teachers so that they are comfortable with both the technical aspects and the issues relating to teaching in this way. These factors should be taken into account in the review of the Education Technology Strategy, which should articulate a path for further development with clear targets to secure significant gains for our young people as soon as possible.

## **School/School Collaboration**

- 5.15 Schools are 'learning communities' which leave a lasting imprint on their pupils through the formal curriculum and by virtue of their culture and ethos and the range of enrichment activities and experiences they offer. All schools, while they may differ in character and curricular emphasis, should be engaged in the pursuit of excellence and in raising the expectations of both staff and pupils. Our proposals seek to reinforce that sense of community and the ongoing responsibility of the school to secure access for their pupils to the range of educational opportunities appropriate to their needs.
- 5.16 Schools can discharge that responsibility through cooperation with other neighbouring schools. Such cooperation already exists in some areas, with resultant benefit to pupils, but it has been hindered by the competitive environment in which many schools have found themselves. To reduce competition over intakes (which in turn determine funding), we recommend elsewhere in this advice that the open enrolment arrangements should be modified to provide greater flexibility in setting admissions and enrolment numbers in individual localities so that the needs of all pupils in an area

can be better met. This should enable schools to engage more fully in collaborative working.

- 5.17 As indicated above, the nature of the collaboration could take a wide variety of forms, and should be flexible so as to be able to respond to changing needs. At a relatively simple level, there could be a sharing of facilities and teaching expertise in a given subject and for certain year groups, thereby allowing the schools involved to timetable an option that may not be viable in isolation. In other instances there could be more extensive collaboration, for example to deliver the full range of GCSEs and GCEs required under the Entitlement Framework; or to secure joint 6<sup>th</sup> form provision or other specialist provision such as a shared sports facility or a resource for pupils with behavioural difficulties. The valuable opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration should also be recognised, and school authorities should proactively explore the potential for cross-community working in the forum of the Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs) – see Chapter 8.

## **Relationship with the FE Sector**

- 5.18 Collaboration between schools and the FE sector has the potential to bring major benefits for all pupils by widening their subject choices. It should also raise the profile of vocational education more generally, something which is too often lacking or under-represented in the normal school timetable, particularly at Key Stage 4 and beyond. There needs to be a new relationship between schools and the FE sector so that pupils can be exposed to a range of learning experiences through a blended curriculum of academic and vocational courses. The FE sector can also help schools to consolidate key skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and managing their own learning. In so doing, pupils would also acquire a much more direct experience of what the FE sector has to offer. Where schools and colleges collaborate effectively and focus on pupil needs, the pupils are better prepared for making fully informed career decisions at a later stage.
- 5.19 It is not the intention that the FE sector should be a parallel school system, which would be wasteful duplication. However there is enormous potential to make better use of what each sector has to offer. In the main, schools will focus on the fundamentals of a good general education and the traditional GCSE subjects, supplemented by a number of vocational subjects. FE for its part can provide a wide range of the more vocational and practical courses, linked to appropriate vocational qualifications.

Appendix 5 provides examples of the range of provision currently or potentially available for learners at FE institutions at different ages and of varied abilities, including the very attractive range of sixth form 'enrichment' programmes. The significant investment in specialised equipment, and development of expertise through initiatives like the "Lecturers into Industry" scheme, mean that FE staff have a much more relevant and current industrial experience that greatly enhances the learning experience of the students. There has also been substantial investment in Centres of Excellence, which are now industry standard, and a number of the centres are currently exploring the curriculum continuum in their area and are looking to signpost and/or create progression routes through 14-19.

- 5.20 Schools already have considerable experience of joint working with their local FE institutions in the context of the Key Stage 4 flexibility pilot and the 'best practice' lessons have been drawn together in the report "Curriculum Continuum and Opportunities for Young People". The proposed Key Stage 4 curriculum will provide the opportunity for all pupils to gain greater experience of the workplace and greater knowledge of the range of provision available to them in the FE sector. This will provide a good foundation for later collaborative provision in the post-16 phase, enabling a wider, more varied and more balanced range of learning pathways from which learners may choose. These arrangements need to be reinforced at strategic level by close liaison between the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Learning so as to ensure a coherent and cost-effective range of provision for all young people in the 14-19 age range. The Group notes that the Department of Employment and Learning is reviewing the FE position and considers that the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Learning should work closely to ensure that the provision for 14-19 year olds is coherent and meets their needs and the needs of the Northern Ireland economy.

### **Piloting collaboration**

- 5.21 It is recognised that effective collaboration arrangements, whether among schools or with FE, will require commitment and effort from the parties concerned, including agreeing the practical arrangements such as synchronisation of timetables and securing transport provision, where applicable. It is vital that, from the perspective of pupils, the provision overall should be well co-ordinated and holistic. The Group welcomes the funding provided through the Development Package announced by the Minister to encourage collaboration and recommends that the Department

should facilitate a small number of early pilots involving larger-scale collaboration, which could serve as pathfinders for similar developments elsewhere.

## Assessment and Accreditation

5.22 The primary purpose of assessment is to inform the learning process and thus contribute to pupils' learning and development throughout their lives.

We consider that:

- "Assessment for learning" is the central focus.
- Assessment and accreditation arrangements must be appropriate for the type of course followed and the teaching and learning approaches. Achievement by pupils at all levels in all curriculum areas, including key skills, enrichment opportunities and personal development, must be recognised. The Group looks to CCEA to continue its work in this area.
- The assessment and accreditation system must be widely understood and have the confidence of the FE and HE sectors, employers and the wider public.
- All qualifications of the same value should be seen to have equal status, and have equivalences in the UK, as determined by the National Qualifications Framework (see Appendix 4), and equivalences in Europe.

5.23 The collation and monitoring of their own assessment data is a feature of self-evaluating schools. While this leads to improvements at individual pupil level as well as at school level, the Group notes the limitations of the current data used. We recommend that the Department should develop measures of "value-added". Value-added is the progress schools help individuals to make relative to their different starting points. The measures developed should reflect pupil progress across a number of dimensions and not solely academic attainment.

## **Pupil Profile**

- 5.24 There was a high level of support for the concept of a Pupil Profile in the responses to the consultation on the Burns proposals. CCEA's proposals for a Pupil Profile should provide a much more holistic and formative account of each pupil's intellectual, personal and social development and a clear and professional assessment of progress, attainment and development needs. This is an important step in recognising achievement on a wider basis. We acknowledge that CCEA's work is building on current best practice in schools and look to CCEA to continue with the development of the Pupil Profile.
- 5.25 The use of a well-developed Pupil Profile would provide the basis on which pupils and parents can decide which learning pathways best suit their individual needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. Pupils and parents will naturally expect to receive professional advice from their school about appropriate pathways. This advice should take account of the information in the Pupil Profile as well as the appropriateness of the learning pathways being considered.
- 5.26 The Group noted and endorsed CCEA's view that the Pupil Profile cannot be used to decide places in the event of a school being oversubscribed. The purpose of the Pupil Profile is to provide a formative record of a pupil's attainments. It should provide a wide range of information but will not be able to be used in a mechanistic way to provide a rank order or a grade to enable pupils to be selected for admission.

## **Quality of Teaching and School Leadership**

- 5.27 Northern Ireland has well-trained and committed teachers, assisted by experienced and dedicated support personnel. This resource, together with committed leadership provided by senior staff, underpins the provision of high quality teaching and learning experiences that motivate and inspire many pupils. The period immediately ahead will be one of significant change and development as schools implement the new curriculum and new assessment arrangements, as well as changes to post-primary provision. The proposals in this advice will also entail new ways of working to accommodate the wider and more diverse range of provision we envisage. Furthermore, schools will require support and encouragement to move from a tightly prescribed curriculum into a more flexible curricular environment.

- 5.28 Achieving our vision of future post-primary arrangements will thus be dependent on serving teachers. They will need relevant in-service training and support, covering not only the curricular changes but also the implications of the other developments arising from the increased use of ICT/ILT and e-learning. Teachers may also be teaching a wider ability range of pupils than previously and may require support to adjust their teaching approaches accordingly. The impact of these changes will need to be reflected in the programmes of Initial Teacher Training. Cognisance should also be taken of the recommendations of the Teachers' Health and Well-Being Survey. In light of the increased emphasis on work-related learning it will be important for teachers to have the opportunity to experience the business environment at first hand through secondment opportunities.
- 5.29 This change process will require careful and skilful leadership and management within schools, and will demand energy and vision in making the proposed new arrangements a reality. Success will be dependent on the continuing development of leadership skills amongst teachers alongside the other programmes of development and support for teachers in the classroom. The parallel needs for staff development in the FE sector must also be recognised. As part of the school development planning process, schools will need a coherent programme of continuing professional development and teacher specific training. Experience in the former 11-16 whole school development programme showed that this can be done effectively and can bring real benefits to the life of the school as a whole and to the motivation and engagement of both staff and pupils.

### **Key Recommendations**

- All pupils should have choice and flexibility in their post-primary education.
- Each school must provide its pupils with access to a range of learning pathways.
- Access is likely to include school to school and school to FE collaboration.

*(continued overleaf)*

- There should be a new relationship between schools and the FE sector so that pupils can be exposed to a range of learning experiences through a blended curriculum of academic and vocational education.
- The precise form of cooperation and collaboration should be determined locally, responsive to local needs, flexible, and capable of changing over time.
- CCEA should continue with the development of the Pupil Profile, which will provide information to help parents and pupils to make informed choices.
- There should be a coherent programme of continuing professional development and teacher specific training to ensure teachers and school leaders are fully equipped to deal with the changes required.