



 Scotland's Colleges

Curriculum for Excellence  
– Developing School/College Partnerships  
(2008-2009)

Joining up the Learning

September 2009

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## Executive Summary

Scotland's Colleges was granted funding by the Scottish Government to coordinate activity to develop school college partnership working in line with Curriculum for Excellence principles and purposes. A pilot project was developed and implemented in partnership with colleges, schools and local education authorities between January and March 2009. This report feeds back on the pilot project activities and evaluation and provides case studies of school college partnership working.

The catalyst for this pilot project was the *Expanding Opportunities* report (HMIE, 2008) which recommended that colleges and schools should:

- jointly map the planned outcomes of school-college programmes to the capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence* so that their wider benefits can be understood by learners, parents and employers
- work together to share and draw on each other's most successful learning and teaching approaches in order to help deliver *Curriculum for Excellence* through school-college partnerships
- carry out further joint evaluation of school-college programmes and draw up plans for improvement for the benefit of all learners.

In addition it explored the progress made by schools and colleges towards carrying out the recommendations contained in *Skills for Scotland 2007* that

- 'Learning and training providers need to consider themselves as part of one system...where integration and working with other providers is the norm.'
- 'School pupils who undertake part of their learning in college...should be able to relate this learning to the wider curriculum and their achievements and learning in college must be recognised and acknowledged within their school.'

Colleges in Scotland have a long and continually evolving programme of collaborative activity with the school sector, through Skills for Work and other locally developed partnerships for example. The project was designed to focus primarily on issues around learning and teaching approaches and aimed to build and improve joint working between school and college staff in order to:

- enhance approaches to learning and teaching within *Curriculum for Excellence*
- encourage joint planning and evaluation of learning and teaching practice between school and college teaching staff
- facilitate the sharing of good learning and teaching practice between school and college teaching staff
- develop a culture of joint working
- evaluate the initial impact of the intervention on joint approaches to learning and teaching within *Curriculum for Excellence*.

The success of these events was dependent in no small measure to the commitment from both colleges and Local Education Authorities. The central role of this partnership at strategic level was identified throughout the pilot as having crucial importance in the success of school college programmes because of the requirement for support at local authority level to enable many aspects of partnerships to develop – for example, funding, resourcing, staff release for joint CPD. Achieving solutions to region wide issues such as common timetabling -where this is considered by all parties to be central to achieving a workable model of school-college collaboration – can only be realised through dialogue between authorities and colleges.

## Key Findings

The findings in this report can be divided into immediate impacts and more in depth evaluation of the pilot activity. Immediate impressions from participants indicated that the college based events had provided:

- new insights on the part of each sector about the other
- evidence of CfE in practice through delivery methods in colleges– eg. experiential learning, reflection and evaluation, teamwork, building confidence through feedback
- affirmation of the need for and value of joint teacher and lecturer CPD together
- evidence of the need for colleges and LEAs to work together to facilitate joint working.

while the pupil focus groups highlighted:

- the need to make learning connections more visible for pupils to reinforce the relevance of the schools' Skills for Work input to the pupil's college activity
- a perceived lack of teacher awareness of pupils' college activity
- the possible benefit to pupils of joint input from teachers and lecturers.

A number of criteria emerged in the course of the pilot as important to ensuring success Joining up the Learning between schools and colleges. **Chief amongst these was that school college programmes must not be seen as 'additional' to the school curriculum but as part of it.**

Other criteria identified were:

- An overarching focus on the learner.
- Commitment from both sides and at all levels -senior level commitment for example is vital
- School/college activity must be sufficiently and effectively planned and resourced
- Effective personal relationships need to be developed and maintained
- Integrated options and coherent timetabling has to be prioritised, with commitment to make it happen
- Involving parents in the aims, content and outcomes of the programmes
- Joint CPD at local, regional and national levels
- Honest and open dialogue
- Recognising and celebrating wider learner achievement
- Mutual recognition of, and capitalising on, each sector's strengths

The recommendations in this report reflect these emerging themes.

## Acknowledgements

Scotland's Colleges is grateful to all the teachers, lecturers and learners from colleges and schools who took part in the pilot project, and with particular thanks to the following:

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<b>Buckhaven High School</b>	Karen Small	Principal Teacher - Guidance
<b>Langside College</b>	Jan Watson	Head of Faculty
<b>Lochgelly High School</b>	Elaine Collins	Head of Behaviour Support
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	Jackie Andrews	Assistant Director - School/College Curriculum
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<b>Oatridge College</b>	Karen Murray	Assistant Principal - Curriculum and Quality
	Adrian Kitchen	Director of Business and Curriculum Development
<b>West Lothian College</b>	Margaret Forisky	College/School Development Officer
<b>West Lothian Council</b>	Michelle Robertson	Education for Work Officer

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Rationale

The Scottish education system is presently undergoing a major review to create a single, coherent curriculum for all children and young people between the ages of 3 and 18. The foundation for this innovative development has been to build on the best thinking and practice that already exists in Scottish education. Preliminary development work has already taken place within Scottish schools. As development work extends in the areas of learning, qualifications and assessment, Scotland's colleges will become more involved with CfE initiatives and build on and further develop the good/innovative practice already demonstrated by the sector. Scotland's colleges demonstrate many features in delivering innovative practice in the areas of personalisation and choice, progression routes, challenge, transition, engaging and motivating learning experiences. Learning and teaching staff in Scotland's colleges also already promote and support a range of essential skills development such as employability, citizenship, equality and inclusion.

Through initiatives such as school/college partnerships, Skills for Work and other locally developed partnerships Scotland's colleges have a long and continually evolving base of collaborative activity with the school sector. The HMIE *Preparing for Work* (Sept 2007) report on the Skills for Work pilot programme highlighted that, in general, school teaching staff were unaware of their learners' progress on Skills for Work courses delivered in colleges or elsewhere. This was particularly the case for the development of core, personal and employability skills. They were also not familiar with the nature of the learning activities on these courses. It was rare for staff from school to accompany learners to their college or elsewhere (p.20). Although specifically reporting on Skills for Work courses, intelligence from both college and school sectors indicates that the findings of the report apply across many school-college collaborative activities.

Building on the HMIE *Preparing for Work* (Sept 2007) the HMIE *Expanding Opportunities* (2008) report recommends that Colleges and schools should:

- Jointly map the planned outcomes of school-college programmes to the capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence* so that their wider benefits can be understood by learners, parents and employers;
- Work together to share and draw on each other's most successful learning and teaching approaches in order to help deliver *Curriculum for Excellence* through school colleges partnerships; and
- Carry out further joint evaluation of school-college programmes and draw up plans for improvement for the benefit of all learners.

The rationale for the Joining up the Learning project emerged from this content.

## 1.2 Aims

The activity carried out in this pilot project aimed to build and improve joint working between school and college staff in order to:

- enhance approaches to learning and teaching;
- encourage joint planning and evaluation of learning and teaching in support of *Curriculum for Excellence*;
- facilitate the sharing of good learning and teaching practice between school and college teaching staff
- develop a culture of joint working, and;
- evaluate initial impact of the intervention on joint approaches to learning and teaching within *Curriculum for Excellence*.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Activity**

Five colleges and their partner schools took part in the project. In three cases the Local Education Authority also contributed to the planning and running of events. In consultation with the project partners, two approaches were adopted:

1. Events based in colleges working with partner schools. School staff were invited into college to take part in a 'College Experience Day' where they could either participate in or observe practical workshops or classes. This was followed by a facilitated seminar during which the specific aims were:
  - To support school and college staff to review the different approaches to learning employed by each sector.
  - To consider ways in which they can provide a more coherent learning experience for students that acknowledges and builds on the contribution of each sector.
  - To open communication channels between school and colleges staff that will enrich practice and provide a more 'joined-up' learning experience for students

At the end of each event participants compiled personal action points. These were kept and mailed out to each participant approximately six weeks after the event.

2. Focus groups with pupils from secondary schools to explore the perceived connections between school and college learning and to elicit information about how arrangements might be improved for future cohorts.

A follow-up dissemination event was held at Dunblane Hydro Hotel on 24 March 2009. Delegates had the opportunity to hear from some of the partnerships involved in the pilot and find out how they intended to build on their initial dialogues in order to ensure closer understanding and collaboration.

### **2.2 Evaluation**

To allow a period of reflection, a questionnaire was sent to all participants in the college based events

- to find out the extent to which the events have contributed to a better understanding by teachers and lecturers of the other sector
- to establish the initial impact of the events on joint approaches to learning and teaching
- to find out how individuals and centres involved in the pilot have or are planning to follow up the immediate outcomes
- to provide case studies of partnership working

Findings from the evaluation are contained in section four of this report.

### **3. Project Activity**

#### **3.1 Moray College, Moray Council and Partner Schools**

##### **Background**

Moray College works in partnership with eight Moray Council secondary schools and one in the Highland Council area. At the time of the pilot activity there were approximately 700 school pupils - mainly S3 and S4 – following college courses in Childcare, Construction, Engineering, Sport, Hairdressing, Cosmetology, ESOL, and Psychology. Delivery is on the main college campus, in Learning Centres, a new Vocational Centre and in schools. In addition the college ran Aspire North tasters for S2 pupils and a Science Festival mainly aimed at the Primary sector.

In 2006 the college appointed a member of staff who became the single college link for schools programmes. A Schools Strategy Group and a Schools Short Life Working Group were set up and links were established with the College Liaison Association with Scottish Schools (CLASS) The college publishes a Schools Prospectus, is involved in the selection and recruitment of pupils on Skills for Work and other courses and has made good progress in establishing links with Moray Council Education Department, Head Teachers, Deputes and Guidance teams. This progress was recognised by HMIE in May 2008.

A logical next step for the College was to bring lecturers and teachers together to strengthen the links and to foster greater mutual understanding of the work of each sector.

##### **The Event**

The Moray College event was attended by 29 college staff, 25 schools staff, four from Moray Council and two from Scotland's Colleges.

In the Morning Session participants attended two hands-on workshops from a choice of: Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Science, Childcare, Construction, Engineering, Sport, and Hospitality.

##### **Immediate Impacts**

During the event at Moray College, links were established that will result in shadowing opportunities and sharing of good practice.

- College staff have been invited to attend Principal Teachers meetings
- Schools staff have been invited to participate in College Course Committee Meetings
- Arrangements have been made for some joint CPD.

The College and the Council have a commitment to continue the dialogue and are actively looking for ways of developing school-college communication and further engagement with school colleagues on Curriculum for Excellence.

Common timetabling within Moray schools continues to be an aspiration.

### **3.2 West Lothian and Oatridge Colleges and Partner Schools**

West Lothian College has a long standing and well coordinated programme of school college partnerships and works closely with the schools coordinator from West Lothian Council and the 11 secondary schools in the area to make it work. Due to the specialist nature of their provision, Oatridge College works with schools from a wider area, including North Lanarkshire, Linlithgow, West and East Lothian.

#### **The Event**

The two colleges held separate taster sessions, observing sessions and talking with learners and lecturers. A joint session was then held at West Lothian which was attended by seven college staff, nine schools staff, two from West Lothian Council and one from Scotland's Colleges.

### **3.3 Langside College and Partner Schools**

Langside College is engaged in a wide variety of school college activity with three local authorities and delivers programmes to over 600 either in -school or in-college.

#### **In College delivery**

In partnership with Glasgow City Council, South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire Langside College delivers Skills for Work courses from S3 to S6 in Early Years Childcare, Social Care, Uniformed and Emergency Services, Hairdressing, and Rural Skills. Students attend College on one or two half days.

New Directions is a three days per week course for students in S4 in East Renfrewshire for whom an alternative to the school curriculum is considered beneficial. Another alternative provision which is full time is the Achievers' Programme which is designed for young people who are not engaging in the school mode of delivery.

Senior school pupils also attend college on two half days opting into the Highers Programme in Advanced Higher English and Modern Studies, Higher Psychology, Philosophy, Geography, Economics, and Sociology. Other Vocational provision for senior pupils includes St. Andrew's Ambulance First Aid, Employment Law, Science and Engineering, Sport and Oracle Academy – this last being delivered on-line.

Programmes for students with special needs are delivered to pupils from eight Special Schools and some mainstream schools in Horticulture, Catering, Beauty, Auto-valeting, Childcare and others.

#### **The Event**

The Langside event focused on the college's provision in Childcare. In the morning session teachers from partner schools joined an NQ group and participated with the students in the class activities. In the afternoon session 11 college staff joined four teachers and three staff from Scotland's Colleges for a facilitated discussion.

### 3.4 Event Outcomes

Although each event generated specific local perspectives in partnership working there was consistent overlap across all events in relation to the overarching key aspects covered in the discussion sessions.

#### Key Points from Discussion Groups

##### 1. Curriculum for Excellence - tell me about it

This activity explored the extent to which Curriculum for Excellence purposes and principles were taken into account when planning lessons and practical sessions. The overwhelming response was that very little formal consideration is given to this at present at practitioner level in either the participating schools or the colleges. This was a surprise to both sets of practitioners – college lecturers had assumed that schools would be very much involved in mapping activity to CfE while teachers expressed surprise at the lack of focus on the part of their college counterparts since they felt that much of what they had experienced in the taster sessions demonstrated the types of approach which would develop many aspects of the four capacities of CfE. Learning and behaviours observed and cited as evidence included

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Understanding Language</li> <li>• Reasoning</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Concentration</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Working</li> <li>• Problem Solving</li> <li>• Time and Task Management</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Administration</li> <li>• Organisation</li> <li>• Respect/attitude change</li> <li>• Employability</li> <li>• Numeracy – measuring, fractions, angle</li> <li>• Fun</li> </ul>
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##### 2. So far so Similar/ Different

This discussion session was designed to promote a better mutual understanding of how schools and colleges operate. Teachers and lecturers discussed what they felt to be key similarities and differences between the sectors which were most likely to impact on student learning.

Participants identified more commonality than they anticipated prior to the event particularly in relation to assessment and some teaching approaches eg. with mixed ability groups. Assessment for Learning approaches were being adopted either by design or by default. Pupil/student evaluation of learning and teaching approaches was being developed in both sectors.

Apart from the obvious sectoral differences such as age range, organisational procedures and timetabling, participants identified a number of perceived key differences that they felt might impact on student learning:

**In college:**

- Informality of the learning environment
- A more equal learner/teacher relationship
- Different approaches to classroom management
- Emphasis on practical, experiential learning
- More contextualisation and integration of learning
- More emphasis on employability and developing skills for real life
- More student centred approaches / learner autonomy
- More tutorials

**In school:**

Critical skills training for staff was a feature absent in colleges

- More parental engagement
- More specific Enterprise learning
- A more teacher led approach
- More 'spoon feeding' – some participants felt that schools could be more encouraging of independent learning

### **3. Routemap to Joining up the Learning and Bridging the Gap**

In this session participants discussed:

- priority actions required to achieve coherence in the learning experience of pupils in college programme
- how to follow up in school the key learning points arising from pupils' work in college

Priorities identified included:

#### **Communication, Learning and Teaching**

- A named person in each establishment so that there is one key point of contact
- More direct communication between teachers and lecturers to enable sharing of approaches eg.
  - Learning and teaching operational groups that meet regularly
  - Joint meetings of practitioners to identify common objectives and devise learning strategies to meet them
  - School and college staff to meet before course start date to plan / share information re course content
  - Principal Teacher/Curriculum Leader dialogue
  - More college to school and school to college visits
  - More taster sessions
  - College staff teaching in schools as 'visiting specialists'
  - Joint CPD opportunities – sharing approaches eg. Critical Skills training for college staff
  - Sharing curricular approaches to minimise overlap and maximise complementary activity eg. joint mapping of numeracy, literacy and well-being development opportunities in pupils' college programmes with input from school teachers in related areas.
  - Teacher/lecturer buddy system
  - Team teaching
  - Make more use of pupils' college experience in school
  - More meetings like this.

## Selection

- Closer collaboration during selection processes to ensure courses are appropriate to pupils and vice versa. For example:
  - colleges should identify essential requirements in literacy and numeracy for students to successfully achieve the chosen course.
  - discuss course content with schools to make selection of pupils more appropriate
  - 'Pupil profiles' – skills, interests and abilities they have - matched to college courses
  - direct college involvement at options choices info events
  - promote the value of vocational courses in the school. Bring parents into the loop to make them aware of opportunities.
  - more preparatory visits and taster sessions.

## Reporting

- Provide transition forms from schools to better inform college teaching staff about the pupils coming to college including more information on pupils' support needs / behaviour issues / abilities etc.
- Share Pupil Learning Log between school and college
- Share college self evaluation reports with schools.
- Student evaluation of college/school learning experiences
- More feedback from colleges so that schools can include info in report cards eg. college skills reviews/reports four times a year?
- College lecturer attendance as standard at parents nights
  - Direct college involvement in parents' nights in schools
  - Colleges would benefit from access to GLOW for joint record keeping

## 4. Next Steps – 'Your Staff Need You to ...'

In this session participants were asked to identify what they needed school and college managers to put in place in order to enable them to achieve the objective of joining up the learning between school and college:

- Allow time and cover for further staff development
- Make Joint CPD a priority eg. Coordinate in-service days to allow meetings between teachers and lecturers by subject area
- Design curriculum to suit Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) – many problems in transition to employment could be addressed through CfE approaches
- Sort out timetabling – flexibility is needed from schools in order to widen choice.
- Agree responsibilities for funding and coordination of transport
- Better Communication at all levels – not just strategic level. Include teaching staff in school-college partnership meetings
- Demonstrate commitment by creating a designated post in every centre to coordinate school college links (Note: this came from colleges who reported that there was not always a named contact in individual schools.)

### **3.4 Adam Smith College and Partner Schools: Pupil Focus Groups**

Adam Smith College and their partner schools have a developing relationship built on the principles outlined in the rationale for the pilot - enhancing approaches to learning and teaching; joint planning and evaluation of learning and teaching, and sharing of good learning and teaching practice between school and college teaching staff.

The college and schools were already developing approaches to get staff together to discuss teaching/learning approaches as well as areas for development. The Educational Development Team in the college met regularly with school partners and had previously facilitated activities between college and school delivery staff in November 2008 similar to the events held in Moray, West Lothian/Oatridge and Langside in early 2009. The focus for the Adam Smith partnership was therefore to take this initial work a stage further to look at the impact of school-college working in Skills for Work programmes from the learner perspective and to allow information to be gathered on the effectiveness of current links between college and school. The model of Skills for Work delivery is that pupils attend college for two hours a week focusing primarily on the practical vocational skills in their course and this is followed up by a 'third hour' in school.

Scotland's Colleges staff worked with three partner schools, two of which had developed a structured integrative approach for Skills for Work. Discussion with teaching staff and sight of course plans and materials provided evidence of a well planned programme which linked the practical college experience to the wider world of work. The third school had a less formal and essentially unplanned approach to the 'third hour'. There was no dedicated teacher for this class and classroom activity was consequently varied and somewhat lacking in direction. Discussions with the school indicated no lack of desire to provide a more effective model but flagged up resource issues which made a more coordinated approach difficult.

Focus Groups with groups of S3/4 learners following a range of Skills for Work programmes were held in each of the schools.

### **Focus Group Activity**

Each focus group lasted for an hour and overall 38 pupils from three schools participated. Scotland's Colleges staff facilitated. The events featured a series of questions to which pupils responded using an electronic voting system. The questions and collated responses are found in Section Seven. This was followed by small group discussions to explore the thinking behind these responses.

### **Key Observations:**

1. On the positive side, the majority of participants enjoyed the college experience, appreciated different teaching approaches and recognised that they had made progress in employability skills
2. However few of the learners thought that their college experience had any impact on other school learning
3. Few of the learners thought that their teachers knew what or how well they were doing in college
4. Few of the learners made the connection between their college based programme of study and the 'third hour' follow up class in school. This was the case across the board ie. in those schools that had a planned approach and the one that did not.
5. It is perhaps significant that the least forthcoming group in open discussion were from the school where no structured follow up was in place.

When asked what would make a difference in terms of their enjoyment and achievement and to the overall school-college experience participants from across the schools highlighted four main areas:

- Teacher awareness of college activity – they wanted teachers to be better informed about what they were doing in college
- Follow up classes that are more obviously relevant to college activity
- Involvement of college staff in school 'third hour' classes
- More time at college.

In strengthening the effectiveness of the partnership it was clear that some of the challenges for the College and its partner schools are

- Making time for meaningful dialogue and more regular contact between the Skills for Work course team in college and those involved in 'third hour' delivery in the school. In discussion with teachers marrying up school in-service and college away days was mooted as a possibility
- Teacher and lecturer release/cover for collaborative activity
- Making the connections visible for learners – learners still regard even excellent models of provision in the school as separate from their college learning. Having college lecturers drop in to 'third hour' classes on a regular basis may be helpful. A team approach to induction into the 'third hour' class to spell out the connection from the perspective of the lecturer would help to make the connection visible from the outset.

Specific observations from each focus group follow. In reporting on these, no judgement of school organisation and procedures is intended and this report seeks only to articulate the outcomes of the focus group discussions.

### **School One**

School One had no structured approach to the 'third hour' and by their own admission, staff resources were such that the class was taken by different teachers depending on individual timetable and other commitments.

The majority pupil view was that the class had little relevance to their college learning and that their college course was undervalued by the school since who took the class 'depends on who has a free period'. After probing further they volunteered that the class was generally taken by the same two members of staff, but that each seemed unsure what to do with them. When asked what kind of things they did in this class responses ranged from watching DVDs and doing worksheets to talking about their behaviour. In terms of their wider learning and ability to connect their college learning to what they are doing in school, there were few who felt that there was a connection or any positive side effect on their achievement at or attitude to school. Other subject teachers were felt not to know and not to be interested in what the pupils do in college.

#### **Strengths:**

- Pupils following the Skills for Work Childcare course undertook visits to a nursery.
- Two pupils felt that they were more confident speaking out in class when working with the college lecturer.
- Pupils enjoyed the college environment and the relationship with lecturer – calling the teacher by his/her first name continues to make a positive impact.

#### **Improvements**

Although the pupils were on the whole disengaged with the 'third hour' class in school they were able to articulate how it could be improved:

- Involve people from the college
- Get the teachers (from school and college) together so that they know what we do.
- More practical activity
- Tasks that are relevant to the college course

### **School Two**

School Two had a well planned approach to the 'third hour'. It was run by the Business Education department and the teachers were committed to supporting the students to build on their college experience. The work was stimulating and course materials had been devised in consultation with the college that enabled the pupils to think about the world of work in general. The class is designed so that in addition to their Skills for Work course award, successful completion means that pupils also achieve an Enterprise and Employability Award. There was visual evidence in the classroom of pupil activity focussing on employability and essential skills.

Given the good practice demonstrated in the school, it had been anticipated that feedback from the focus group would strongly illustrate the beneficial impact of a joined up approach on students' awareness of the connection between the school based 'third hour' and their college learning. This was not entirely the case and there was still a sizeable percentage of pupils who felt that:

- Going to college made no difference to how they do at school
- Going to college has had no impact on their confidence
- The 'third hour' class in school neither prepares them for nor follows up their college learning
- The 'third hour' class has no connection with what they are doing in college.
- Other subject teachers had no idea what or how well they were doing in college.

### **School Three**

School Three also had a structured approach to the 'third hour', and the pupil's reactions were similar to those of school two. Most pupils regarded the Skills for Work course as a positive experience and gave their reasons as being treated like an adult, given respect and trusted by the lecturer to get on with the work which was practical and hands on. They also liked to get out of school into the college environment.

However pupils generally felt that communication between the school and the college was not good. Two pupils commented that their school teacher had visited the college only once whilst teachers from other schools visited more regularly and that this made them feel unsupported by the school. Teachers were felt not to know what the students did in college and follow up activities were not seen as appropriate by many students – the relevance was neither discussed nor pointed out to them where it was not obvious. They were seen as more school-type activity – mostly worksheets – and that this did not match or complement the approach taken in college with its emphasis on experiential learning.

One hairdressing student volunteered that they had been creating moodboards in art to create hairstyles, but either the college lecturer was unaware of this or they were just not put into practice. However, although pupils realised that teachers coming into the school to see what they do might improve communication they also enjoyed the fact that they were away from school and did not want the teachers to be directly involved too much in college activity

Pupils wanted their parents to know that they were doing well and to show them what they had been working on in college eg. what they had made in engineering rather than the lecturer just talking to the parent. Their preference was for a parent's night in college rather than the lecturer attending the school parent's night.

Two pupils felt that they would not recommend others to do the Engineering Skills for Work course although this seemed to be because of difficulties in the way the course was run rather than its content. There had been seven changes of lecturer and as a result several practical activities were left unfinished which was highly demotivating. They felt that because they were 'just' from the school that the college was less interested in them.

### **Footnote**

The views of the pupils involved, perhaps need to be considered in the context both of the different learning environments of colleges and schools and to the developmental stage of the pupils. They reacted very negatively to what they perceived as the schools treatment of them as children and expressed a strong desire that the school should demonstrate the same level of trust, respect and responsibility which they experienced in the college environment. Lack of respect from teachers while unquestioning respect was demanded of them was a common complaint.

Example One: In one school the college based part of the course is timetabled directly after lunch when many pupils go into town to buy their food. From the centre of town it is a further short walk to the college and pupils expressed the desire to make their own way there directly. However they had to return to the school to be bussed to the college. Their perception was that this was because they were not trusted to turn up to college unless they were taken. If this was not the reason, no other explanation had been shared with them to help them to understand why this had to happen. The bus was often late which meant a late start to the part of the course they enjoyed (The pupils also pointed out that this was a poor example of timekeeping which they had learned was an important skill for work!)

Example Two: When asked how the way they were taught in college differed from school, there were a range of responses which related directly to the pupils' perceptions of their teachers' attitudes towards them eg. 'there's no shouting at you', 'we can share our ideas', 'the teachers at school are bossy and tell you what to do; college lecturers give you more support and treat you like an adult'.

## 4. Post event Evaluation

### 4.1 College-based events

The post event evaluation had four aims:

1. To determine the extent to which the events have contributed to a better understanding by teachers and lecturers of the other sector.
2. To establish the initial impact of the events on joint approaches to learning and teaching.
3. To explore how individuals and centres involved in the pilot are planning to follow up the immediate outcomes.
4. To provide case studies of partnership working.

### Evaluation methodology

A survey questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to all those who had participated in the events – 96 people in all – along with the postcard on which they had written their three action points. A stamped addressed envelope was included to encourage completion and return. Thirty-one surveys were returned and 16 people indicated that they would be willing to participate in any follow-up activity. The questionnaire was made up of three sections:

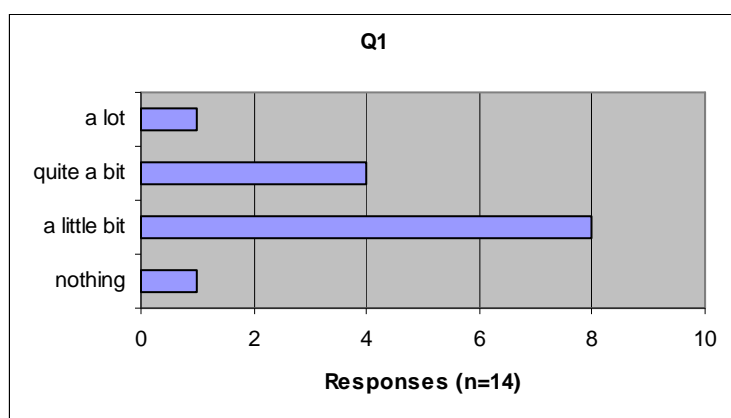
- Section 1: Knowledge exchange (questions 1-3 for school and non-college staff; questions 4-6 for college staff only)
- Section 2: Event impact
- Section 3: Following-up – future joint working approaches.

The breakdown of responses comprised 17 college staff, 12 school staff and two 'others'<sup>1</sup>.

### Evaluation results

#### Section 1

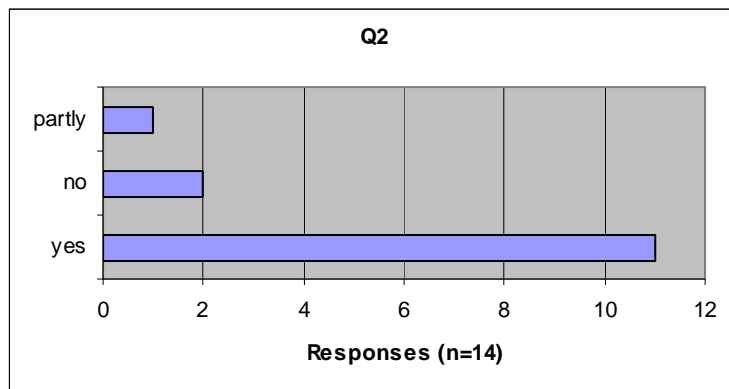
Q1: *How much did you know about school-college partnerships before the event?*



This question was asked to establish the level of awareness of school-college programmes among school and non-college staff involved in the pilot. Those who answered 'nothing' or 'a little bit' were either new to the role or not directly involved in delivering on the programme. That is, they were line managers of staff who taught on these programmes.

<sup>1</sup> One partially completed questionnaire and one Education Department staff member.

Q2: Do you think that the college sessions you participated in were developing the four CfE capacities in the learners?



From what they viewed in the classroom sessions, most school staff were of the opinion that the college session was developing the four Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) capacities during the lesson. The most common observation was that team-working was the basis for enabling the learners to take responsibility for their learning and thus build their confidence by undertaking activities that they might not have done previously. These are some of the responses that were received:

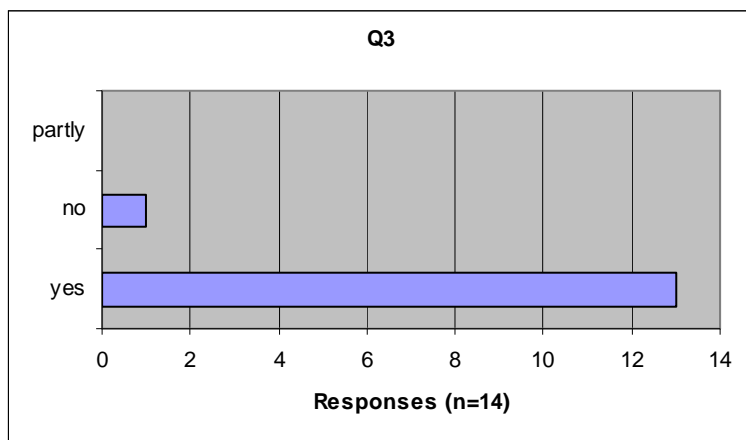
*[A] team approach ensured learners were all active and participating – successful learners. Reporting back to class encouraged confident individuals and effective contributors. Reflection task certainly enabled discussion over responsibilities and need for respect to be shown to needs of parents/carers/young people – responsible citizens. (Feedback from observation of a Childcare and Early Years class.)*

*Students were involved in learning through a variety of activities. Tasks were deliberately designed to develop confidence and responsibility. Students were allowed to make choices regarding how they would achieve clear criteria.*

One respondent made the point that 'vocational courses are a natural 'fit' for CfE' as it is a little easier to 'join-up' the learning here. Another respondent stated that learners were learning the importance of 'the responsibility of working with a partner, taking a specific role'. However, this was not necessarily the position in every class as the respondent who answered 'partly' said:

*There is no doubt that the activities I witnessed contributed to successful learners and confident individuals but in which ways this would change mindset or core principles of the individual to make them more effective contributors or responsible citizens I did not see.*

*Q3: Would you say that you now have a better understanding of the teaching methods used and the learning environments found in the college sector after taking part in this pilot?*

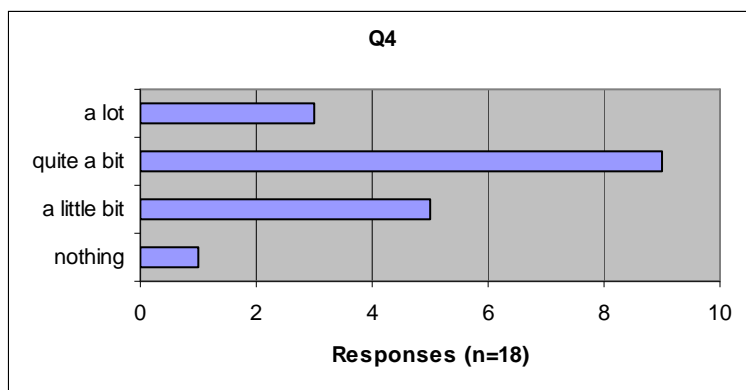


Only one respondent stated that, on this occasion, they did not have a better understanding of the teaching methods used and the learning environments found in the college sector. Again, school staff were able to recognise many similar approaches to learning and teaching in colleges to their own. For example: 'I was particularly impressed by the use of formative assessment techniques' and 'teaching methods used were very similar to those in schools'. Many respondents to this section commented how useful it had been to observe a 'live' college session and to have an opportunity to talk to college staff, which enhanced their understanding of 'the subjects on offer to secondary students at college'.

*It became clear during the day that college staff are implementing methods that motivate and encourage learners. AifL [Assessment is for Learning] strategies are being used to enhance experiences.*

*Visiting various classes allowed me to view students and staff working together. I was able to view excellent resources and very good teaching and learning experiences.*

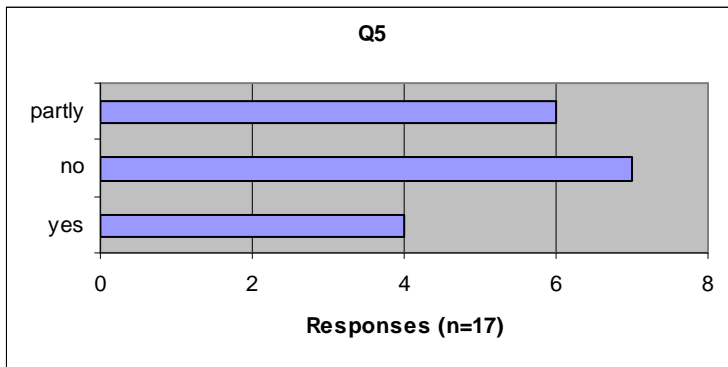
*Q4: How much did you know about school-college partnerships before this pilot programme began?*



**Note: this is the only question answered by one respondent thus n=18**

There is a bias towards the 'quite a bit' statement here because the pilot participants were already involved in Skills for Work or similar skills/employability programmes. The respondents fell into three broad categories: those who taught, those who line managed the teaching staff and those who organised the various programmes.

Q5: Have you adapted your normal teaching practice to take account of the four [CfE] capacities in the past year?



Question five asked college staff if they had adapted their normal teaching practice to take account of the four [CfE] capacities in the past year. Those who answered ‘no’ ranged from the new lecturers who had only recently been introduced to CfE or who had not yet been required to consider the four capacities specifically for their teaching to those who felt that they were already demonstrating teaching practices that took account of the requirements for developing the four capacities.

Some of the staff who answered ‘yes’ stated that emphasis on CfE skills take priority in [their] course set-up. Another respondent said:

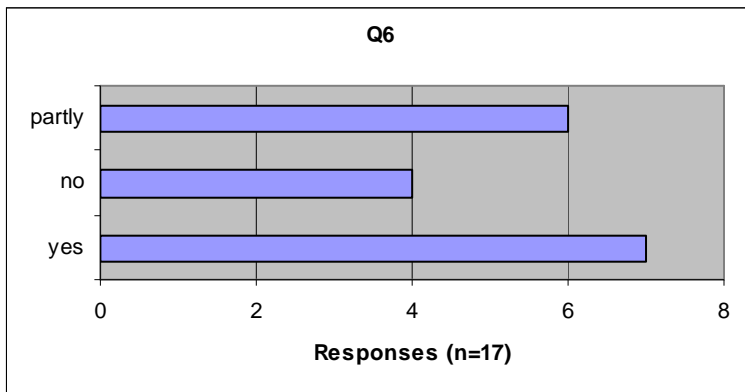
*I teach in Early Education and Childcare so not only teaching students to go out on placement [to settings where CfE is being implemented] but also teaching under-18s. I have a responsibility to adapt my teaching accordingly. I try to make my lessons as interactive as possible and show relevance to the learning [outcomes].*

The following response summarises how many college staff feel about their responsibilities towards younger learners:

*I care for my students and what I do for and with them is in order to make them the best they can be. I lead their personal development and am concerned with making them employable in all aspects.*

College lecturers who answered ‘partly’ were introducing the capacities gradually to their teaching and learning activities to suit their younger learners or were aware that there will be a need to update some of the PDAs (Professional Development Awards) to cover CfE, such as Introduction to Teaching.

Q6: *Would you say that you now have a better understanding of the teaching methods used and the learning environments in schools after taking part in this pilot?*

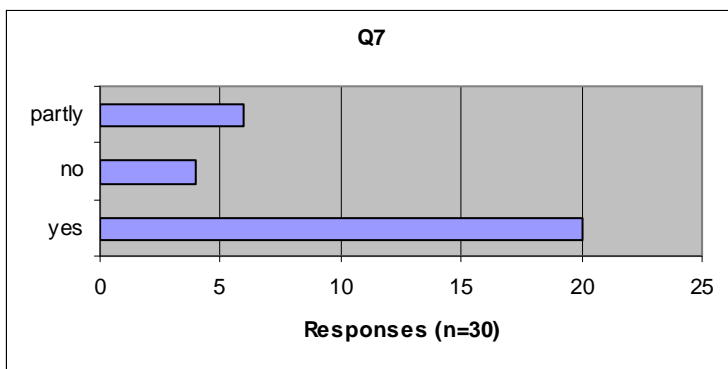


This was the last question for college staff only. Responses were dependent upon the contact that this group of staff had with schools and the number of schoolteachers who were able to attend the events. This comment sums up the situation: *'It is good to have time to network and hear the views of school staff as we don't get a chance to do this'*.

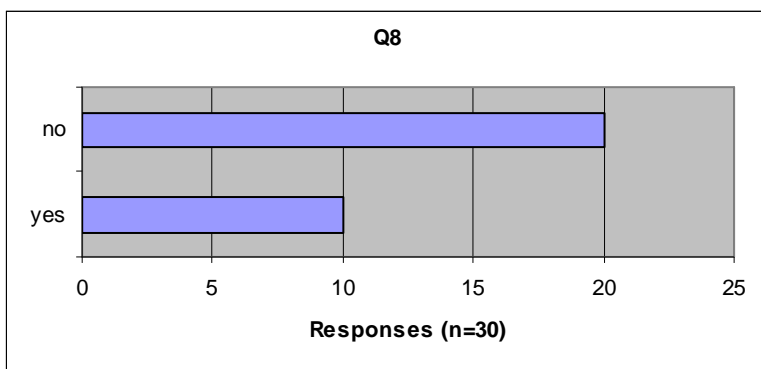
**Section Two**

The questions in Section Two focussed on the impact of the events held. They asked participants to reflect on the knowledge they had acquired about each other's learning and teaching practice and environments and to consider how they might work together in future in order to 'join up' the learning.

Q7: *Did attending the events give you some ideas on how a joint-working approach might help to join up the learning between school and college?*



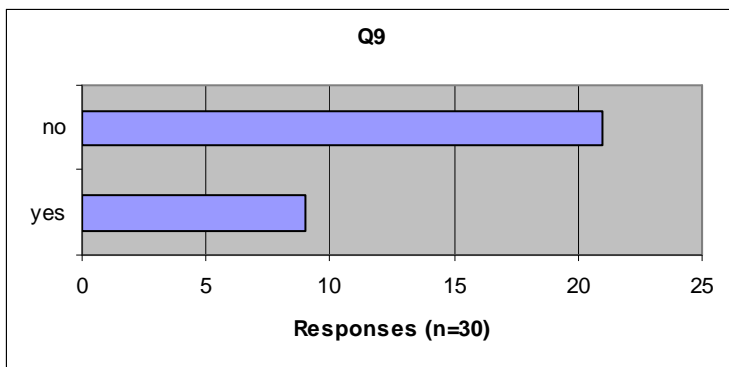
Q8: *Did you act on these ideas immediately after attending the event?*



Positive responses to the question ‘Did you act on these ideas immediately after attending the event’ offer some strategy options to school and college management teams. For example, presenting to SMTs and proactively meeting with the local college(s) and Council staff member(s) with responsibility for CfE. (Case studies detailing successful, effective partnerships like this appear later in this evaluation.) One respondent suggested that setting up a joint course team with school and college staff ‘enables a joint working approach to be effective’. Another respondent has already instigated joint CPD sessions and others are rethinking their session arrangements for the 09/10 academic year. One respondent suggested using career reviews (if involved in a school-college programme) as an opportunity to visit a secondary school (and a primary school as well) to see some of the teaching methods that they use.

For those who have not yet acted on their ideas, this can be related to the range of barriers that will be discussed in relation to question 10 but could be summarised as funding, time, logistics and timetabling issues. It should not be regarded as an indication of a lack of willingness or commitment to move joint-working forward.

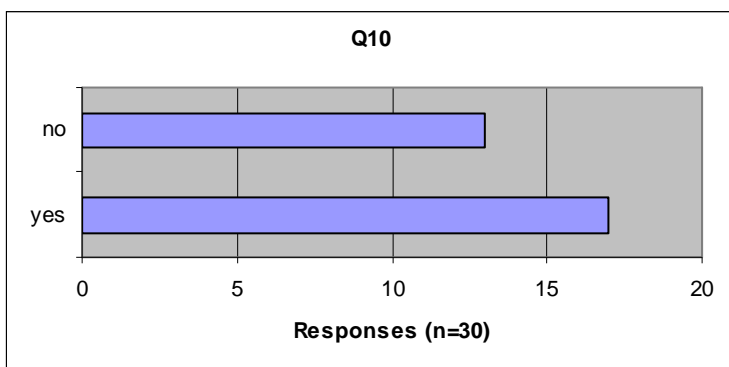
Q9: *Have you followed up on any of the contacts that you made on the day?*



Responses this question ranged from ‘already have good contacts’ to ‘we will be discussing this soon with local college/school in preparation for the new academic year’. Elaborating on their answers brought responses such as:

- ‘[we] would be interested in strengthening our partnership with [college] into other vocational areas’;*
- ‘we intend to ask East Renfrewshire Council for a return visit in schools’*
- ‘we plan to work with more schools to link school subjects with appropriate college courses’.*

Q10: *Are there barriers to your two local institutions (school and college) adopting joint-working approaches in the future?*



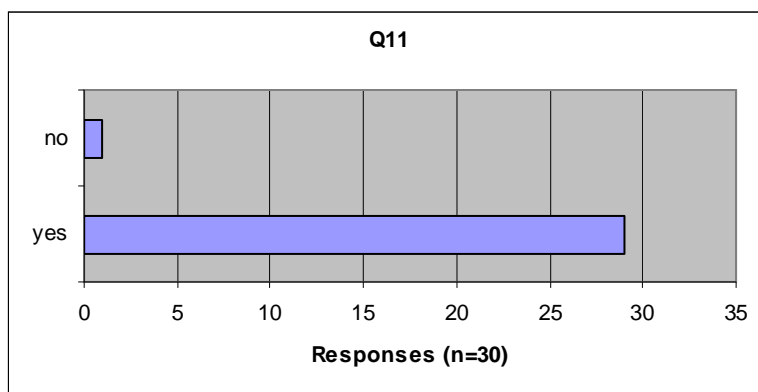
It is interesting to note here that responses were almost split 50-50 to this question. The respondents who agreed that there were barriers to the local institutions adopting joint-working approaches in the future cited the same barriers repeatedly. They did not indicate how they proposed to overcome these perceived barriers.

- timetabling – there was no time to meet together and plan in order to overcome the difficulties involved in finding logistical and timetabling solutions to suit both schools and colleges and to follow-up that delivery. Also, many regions do not have common timetabling in their areas.
- funding – not enough college places for those pupils who want them
- distances to be travelled between schools and college
- not having designated contacts in the school/college to go to directly for information
- schools not being able to have additional access to college facilities eg. hospitality or beauty and hairdressing salons in order to enhance learning opportunities
- colleges need schools to communicate more directly with them
- transport – cost and reliability issues (this is linked to Health and Safety requirements according to the institutions' risk assessments), also issues with the amount of staff time it takes to ensure that children are on the buses at the right time
- the number of institutions involved – it is not always just one school and one college but could be 18 local institutions and three local authorities
- attempts to change the mindset of uninterested partners.

### Section Three

Section Three asked about respondents' plans for following-up and future joint working approaches.

*Q11: Do you feel that it would be useful to continue the programme by facilitating sessions for college staff in schools?*



The respondent who answered 'no' stated that *'[it's] not about staff, [it's] about arranging partnership agreements that give pupils more vocational opportunities and experience'*.

There were many suggestions from respondents of topics to be covered in any future programme activities. One respondent stated:

*It may be useful to have college staff comment on/observe interdisciplinary learning in schools although it must be stated that schools are only coming to terms with what this might look like). College staff may be better placed to advise without the constraints of subject specialisation.*

Under a broad label of ‘teaching observation and practice’ the suggestions were:

- shadowing school staff for a day
- shadowing a teacher and a pupil for a day<sup>2</sup>
- observing *whole* lessons
- sharing creative solutions more widely
- strategies for disciplining pupils in the college environment
- schools’ use of technology to enhance learning and teaching
- how to develop elements of courses/subjects further in college eg. practical situations for hospitality students
- developing courses jointly
- exploring the funding sources available.

Another broad theme of ‘joint CPD’ emerged covering:

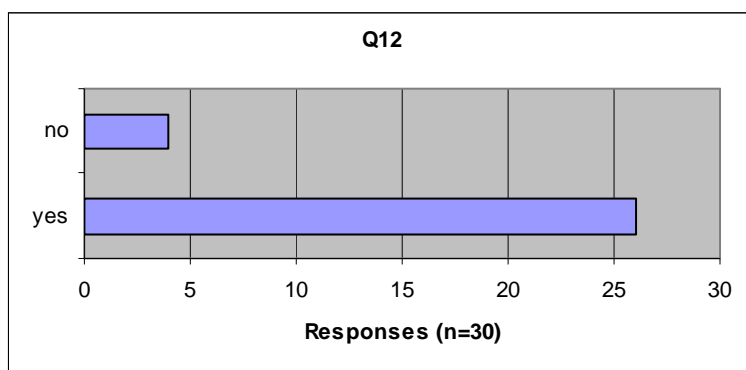
- joint practical sessions on timetabling
- understanding subject choices for future careers
- sessions on familiarisation with the programme and associated teaching methods.

‘Looking after young people’ included suggestions such as:

- creating efficient reporting systems
- how to gather and exchange background information on learners (under existing legal restrictions)
- practical suggestions on how to better support pupils
- strategies for closing the gaps for pupils and for transition.

Opportunities for networking are also vital in building good partnerships. As one respondent says: *‘I enjoyed meeting people from other schools and would like the opportunity to have a [similar] workshop at a school’*

Q12: Most participants suggested that joint CPD would be useful in strengthening school-college partnerships. Do you agree?



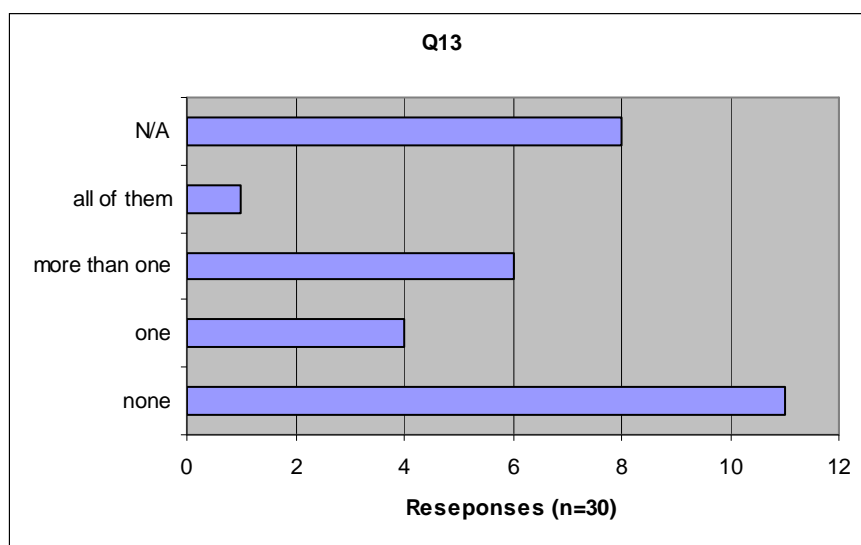
<sup>2</sup> This was the response from one of the respondents who suggested pupil shadowing:

*I think the experience of following a pupil round the school for a day is vital in getting an understanding of the whole school experience. We have the opportunity to do this as student teachers and it is a real eye opener – the pressure put on pupils as they move from one class to the next, the huge variety of teaching styles and the different expectations from teachers is amazing. I think it would be beneficial for college staff to see the variety that school pupils face during the day and how they adapt their behaviour and learning styles to cope with the pressure of a varied curriculum. It would also be an eye opener with regards to CfE and how much (or little) it is rolled out in some areas of the school.*

A sizeable majority of respondents felt that joint CPD sessions would be useful in strengthening school-college partnerships with respondents saying 'joint CPD is useful where interests are similar'. The subjects they felt should be the focus of joint CPD sessions were:

- sharing information, teaching practice and strategies for implementing CfE
- joint planning for Skills for Work
- more sharing/discussion of 16+ learning choices
- more joint planning for S4, S5 and S6 learning curriculum options
- increasing teacher and lecturer motivation and confidence
- use of ICT
- AifL
- breaking down barriers, engaging learners and managing behaviour
- motivation skills
- understanding each other's sector and associated teaching practice
- specific subject work such as the Science Baccalaureate and Skills for Work in the health sector
- teaching methods – differentiation and acceleration.

*Q13: Thinking about the postcard that you wrote your action points on, how many of these have you managed to implement?*



**Note: not all respondents had completed a postcard with action points.**

The respondents who answered this question had written three action points on a postcard that they felt they would be able to implement when they returned to their institution. For those who answered 'none' a range of reasons were cited. Lack of funds and time to discuss and plan were mentioned often. Those who answered 'one', 'more than one' or 'all of them' generally felt that their suggestions were moving 'through the system' and would come to fruition when the new academic session began. Further, it appeared that several people had made one of their action points to establish better communication about SfW or similar programmes with colleagues and several reported that they had done this at various levels eg. from departmental colleagues to SMTs.

The final question asked institutions to tell us if they felt that they did something in their partnership well that they would like to share with others. Some respondents felt that they communicated well by 'establishing a good contact at the college leads to effective placements taking place'; and establishing a 'school-college strategy group' and 'hold regular meetings with council representatives'. Two respondents did provide fuller responses:

*Making Choices is unique and adds most value for pupils. The placement element is truly a life-changing experience for participants.*

*We develop the pupils' softer skills, which sometimes go unacknowledged as some schools are focused on attainment and league tables.*

Overall, there was a reticent response to this question. There is anecdotal evidence that there are many good partnership activities that could share and disseminate their findings and practice with a wider audience but perhaps more targeted investigation of all programmes would result in a more coherent picture of the current situation.

## **4.2 Focus Groups**

### **Emerging themes from the focus groups**

The combined results from the School-College Focus groups reveal a number of positive attitudes towards the school-college programmes. Firstly, 76% of pupils 'really enjoy' their college course, which may be due to the fact that 71% of respondents answered that they are taught differently in college to school. The schools have reported anecdotally that these different teaching practices have succeeded, in some cases, in encouraging 'difficult' pupils to engage in meaningful learning activities leading to achievement and attainment. A proportion of the young people also felt that they had made progress with the acquisition of employability skills since attending college. For 45% of the young people, college had helped them to do better at school and made them more interested in doing well at school. In discussing 'confidence' the pupils were either 'more confident' generally (32%) or felt 'more confident at college' (24%). 48% of the young people said that they would 'encourage younger pupils to choose a college course'.

However, there are also some attitudes that indicate that there is room for improvement. 61% of the pupils said that they 'sometimes' used their communication skills in college while 60% said that they *never* use number skills in college. Further, 55% stated that going to college 'makes no difference to how I do at school'. When asked about the effect on their confidence levels, 45% feel that going to college has had no effect on their confidence levels.

One of the aims of the pilot was to ascertain how much connection between school and college curricula was apparent to the pupils and how much joint planning occurred. Some of the striking points of note here are that the majority of pupils believe that their teachers do know what they do in college even if they do not discuss it much yet 55% of the pupils do not think that it is a good idea for their school teachers to visit their college classes. Further, 32% of college tutors attend parents' evenings. It may be even more effective for the pupils and parents to visit the college for a parents' evening so that parents gain a better understanding of what their child is doing in college.

Where joint planning does exist, it is clear that there is a perception gap between the pupils and their school and college. That is, the pupils do not understand how Skills for Work is preparing them for the future and they cannot 'join the dots' between their school work and the college curriculum (and the follow-up session). This is evidenced by 66% of them responding to the statement 'The school Skills for Work class concentrates on employability skills' in the negative: 'No, we usually do other things not necessarily connected with college'. Further, only 24% stated that 'The follow-up class in school helps me do better at college'.

### **Focus Groups follow up by Adam Smith College and school partners:**

#### **Initial Action**

The results from the focus groups were fed back to the individual schools by the college and a collation was presented to the College School Partnership Review Group, which is the operational group of the Adam Smith College School College Partnership and also to the College School Partnership Strategy Group. Key initial findings were shared internally and form part of the work of the Review Group.

- An overwhelming majority of pupils really enjoy college
- Pupils identify the development of communication skills more than numeracy skills on college courses.
- There is less connection with school curriculum, pupils feel teachers do not know how they are performing at college but a majority of the pupils did not want their teachers to come to college.
- Pupils feel they are making progress in their employability skills at college (although around a fifth of pupils were not sure of the definition of employability).
- Just over half the replies stated that going to college did not help them with school subjects but on the broader question over two thirds said going to college helped them do better at school.
- There was a difference between schools which ran specific Skills for Work classes at school and those which didn't. Specifically this was in the area of college work helping in school subjects and school life in general.

#### **Resultant action**

It was agreed at the Strategy Group that the results needed further study and that more detail was required for follow up. The follow up will take place in the autumn 2009 term with the Review Group focussing in on areas worthy of further research.

#### **Follow up**

Due to the small numbers involved the partners were cautious about reading too much into this data but it was seen as a base to do further focussed research. It was also recognised that pupils attended college for only two hours of their whole school experience and that it would be difficult to abstract their thoughts on one particular subject area.

The following could be taken into account in current delivery;

- Connection to specific subject areas would seem to be in keeping with Curriculum for Excellence particularly with the forthcoming Building the Curriculum 4 focus on skills.
- Literacy and numeracy feature but more emphasis could be put on the numeracy elements of delivery.
- The assumption that employability is central to Skills for Work Courses is correct but needs to be made more explicit to pupils.
- The confidence question needs further detail as it is difficult to extract pupil confidence on a single class at college from their global learning experience.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations fall into three categories: those specific to the college based event evaluation aims and objectives, general emerging issues and those specific to the focus group findings.

1. It must be acknowledged that the bias in the college based events was weighted towards giving school staff an opportunity to observe teaching methods and learning environments in colleges. For this reason, knowledge exchange in relation to sharing of best practice and successful approaches was limited particularly in those events where staff were unable to participate in the afternoon seminar sessions. The success of these events was dependent on delivering staff in colleges welcoming visitors into their learning environments; Local Authorities releasing school staff and both schools and colleges finding suitable timetable synchronicity. Overall, the responses from all stakeholders indicate that the events did contribute towards 'a better understanding by teachers and lecturers of the other sector'. Further, additional opportunities for reciprocal visits would be welcomed.

When the responses to questions 7 to 10 are analysed, regarding the initial impact of the events on joint approaches to learning and teaching, there is a mixed picture. While the majority of respondents agreed that they had some ideas on how to implement a joint-working approach, they were not able to act on these ideas *immediately* after the event. For some respondents this was due to the barriers that they perceived were preventing them doing this and which can be broadly categorised as funding, time pressures that make joint-working very difficult and a lack of common timetabling within school areas. Respondents indicated too that they were working to overcome some of these challenges and anticipated that they would be able to adopt some new ways of working together in the new academic year. However, it is possible to make time to jointly discuss timetabling approaches – some schools and colleges are already doing this in conjunction with their local authority. Further, it is easy to appoint a designated contact person in both school and college who acts as a central information point. This in turn makes it easy for school and college to communicate more efficiently.

It was pleasing to note that some partnerships have made a commitment towards extending the existing arrangements by making links in more subjects or forming new partnerships with local colleges for other subject areas. These successful partnerships have at least three significant factors in common:

- Firstly they have established good communication and reporting systems so that any challenges or issues that arise can be dealt with at an early stage
- Secondly, there is usually a good relationship between the school, college and the local authority education department. This means that all the stakeholders become aware of issues such as timetabling conflicts and strategies for ameliorating these can be found that satisfy all parties. To some extent, however, success is dependent on the size of the local authority area
- Thirdly all parties have an effective working relationship that leads to a coordinated approach towards implementing school-college programmes. For example, Moray College has set up a school-college strategy group so that planning is carried out in a coordinated way.

It is clear that the college staff involved in the pilot programme (and who are involved in Skills for Work and similar programmes) would welcome the opportunity to undertake visits into secondary schools. Whole day classroom observation and pupil shadowing where practicable would go some way to enhancing sectoral understanding of not only Curriculum for Excellence but also school learning and teaching environments.

A further consequence would be closer working relationships that could lead to improved opportunities for joined-up planning involving schools, college(s) and local education authorities where appropriate. This in turn would link into opportunities for practical, engaging joint CPD sessions to encourage further cooperation and joint approaches to teaching and learning.

2. General issues that arose as areas of concern among respondents centre around transport, designing and developing subject links, knowledge of CfE in colleges and dealing with behavioural issues of the young learners in college.

#### *Transport*

This is a contentious subject for both colleges and schools. Due to the distances involved, some schools need to bus learners from school to college(s) and have many issues with the costs of this as well as the time that it takes from the school day. Some partnerships have also had difficulty in finding contractors for their programmes. It also requires significant staff time from both institutions to ensure that pupils board their bus and arrive at their destination. It was also clear from the focus groups with the young people that they would be happier to walk to college in many places if a suitable arrangement can be arrived at that meets health and safety/risk assessment criteria. As pupils in one school pointed out, they walk into town to buy their lunch and walk back again but this is not permitted when they are deemed to be 'in school' and under it's *in loco parentis* protection. However in another area, pupils leave school and are trusted to take public transport to the college: there are few incidents of truancy and the young people use the opportunity to mix socially by eating lunch together before classes begin.

#### *Making links*

A number of respondents made the point that it is simply easier to establish programmes in certain subjects than it is in others therefore subjects such as hospitality, hairdressing and beauty, childcare, construction and motor vehicle engineering are the most common programmes run.

#### *Curriculum for Excellence*

College respondents who said that they knew at least a little about CfE did so because they were involved in school-college links and were full-time staff. It is clear however that part-time staff and those not involved in Skills for Work or similar programmes now require staff development opportunities to find out more about the implications of CfE on the overall curriculum college and what individual college staff and course teams need to do ensure that their learning and teaching practice responds to the aspirations and intentions of the four CfE capacities.

*Behaviour and teaching methods*

A few of the respondents mentioned that they were either new in post (had never taught secondary school pupils before) or were new to the Scottish system in general and would appreciate specific training on how to deal with challenging behaviour of some younger learners in college. This issue is not necessarily just one relating to new lecturers. Another issue of teaching practice that was raised by more than one respondent was that of differentiation and acceleration. These practices are not routine in normal college classroom environments and it would be useful to help college practitioners understand how to continue to implement these practices with the young people in order to keep continuity of learning.

3. The clear message emerging from the Focus Groups is that where delivery of programmes is split between schools and colleges it is fundamental to their success that close working exists between the two to ensure that the connections between college based and school based learning is made clear and visible to the pupils. The less formal and more adult college environment, the involvement in practical tasks and the strength of the lecturer-pupil relationship are the factors most often cited in pupils' reasons for enjoying and engaging with the college programme. Conversely the familiarity of the school environment, a focus on written work and the more formal teacher pupil/child relationships makes it difficult for the schools to achieve the same level of pupil engagement especially where there is no strong visible connection between the school and college provision. Pupils in the main see the school and college activity as distinct and separate and, despite the best efforts of the school often fail to make the connection between the two. Strategies to overcome this may include:

- Joint school-college involvement in selection for courses.
- Involvement of both school and college staff at course induction
- Recognition in the school of college activity and achievement
- Reinforcement by the college of the importance of the school-based input
- Teacher visits to college and lecturer visits to school.
- Team teaching – need not be every time but often enough for pupils to recognise that the college lecturer and employers value the work carried out by the pupils in the school as preparation for and consolidation of their work in college and beyond into the world of work
- Joint badging of teaching materials used in school
- Strongly contextualised school follow up activity
- Parental visits to college to see students' work .

In summary, the teacher/lecturer questionnaire responses indicate that the majority of participants do have a better understanding of each other's sector and college staff in particular are beginning to embed activities that will enhance the development of the four CfE capacities in their learning and teaching activities. However, opportunities for both sectors to observe teaching and learning activities in each sector need to continue in order to develop this understanding further.

A small majority of respondents indicated that they were already making adjustments, either partly or wholly, to their teaching practice and that this would continue as their professional knowledge increased or they became more involved in Skills for Work or similar programmes. Further, at least two education areas have made determined and significant plans to follow up the immediate outcomes of the networking that resulted from involvement in this college based events while Adam Smith College and its partner schools are taking forward the findings of the Pupil Focus Groups through their College School Partnership Strategy Group.

## **6. Case Studies**

### **6.1 Moray Schools/College Strategy Group**

This group was formed after an HMle review in 2006 highlighted this aspect. The group meets between four to six times each year to agree strategic objectives for schools/college curriculum and progress towards their achievement. It fits within the broader framework of Moray Community Planning and the Single Outcome Agreement and is thus indicative of a very close working partnership now with The Moray Council.

Its impact was recognised in the follow up review in May 2008 and at our recent annual engagement feedback HMle noted that progress had been 'amazing'. We regard it as a great example of turning a relative weakness into a significant strength.

#### **Group membership and meetings**

Mike Devenney (Principal, Moray College) - Chair  
Tom McGarry (Assistant Principal, Moray College)  
Jackie Andrews (Assistant Director, Moray College)  
George Sinclair (Head of Educational Development Services, Moray Council)  
John Trodden (Quality Improvement Officer, Moray Council)  
Stephanie Gibson (Educational Support Officer, Moray Council)  
Susan Chalmers (Skills Development Scotland)

We meet at Moray College and because the membership is relatively small in number and committed to progress we seldom have any non attendance and have never had to cancel a meeting.

#### **Impact and challenges**

Senior staff in both Moray College and Moray Council have become highly visible in pursuing the success of this key strategic initiative, working with staff at the more operational level. For Moray College this has facilitated a renewed focus on learning and teaching issues and highlighted the challenges faced by staff in delivering to different student groups. This has led to improvements eg. joint delivery by school/college staff.

Communication systems between lecturing staff, senior college staff and the schools themselves have been tested and improvements implemented, particularly through aspects such as pupil behaviour. Strategies have had to emerge to deal specifically with this. As the partnership has evolved it has now started to be possible to devolve more of the decision making although within a context that is seen as fair to each individual school and each situation. College staff have recognised that in some cases they require CPD to better equip them in dealing with delivery to school pupils and this has been provided with a good uptake.

This success is based not only on the commitment and hard work of those within the strategy group but the ability for this to filter down to more operational levels in feeder schools and college.

### **How will the activities of the group develop in the future?**

The group's future activity will be shaped not only by emerging local priorities within Moray but also national developments:

- National Concordat and Single Outcome Agreements
- Curriculum for Excellence
- More Choices More Chances
- 6+ Learning Choices
- Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy.

Immediate priorities have been identified as:

- ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the current provision
- tackling the challenging curriculum and learning and teaching issues relating to Curriculum for Excellence
- the identification of more comprehensive S5 and S6 opportunities
- further developing projects with local primary schools (we now have two projects ongoing in IT and Horticulture)
- the development of further joint schools/college CPD activities (four courses have already run for MCMC related courses)
- delivery of Critical Thinking training by Moray Council staff to college staff will feature in our August staff development programme
- school staff representation in college subject teams and vice versa.

At the time of writing we await official confirmation of funding from Skills Development Scotland to support a transitions project. This will involve the purchase of a number of Flip Digital Camcorders so that our upcoming intake of pupils can record their college and school experiences to assist themselves, college and school staff to fully appreciate how the learning links together from both environments. This will be professionally edited, copied onto a CD and presented by the pupils to staff, from both sectors, school pupils and parents. This will become an annual feature.

## **6.2 Making Choices Programme: A True Childcare Experience Option**

### **Langside College and Smithycroft Secondary School**

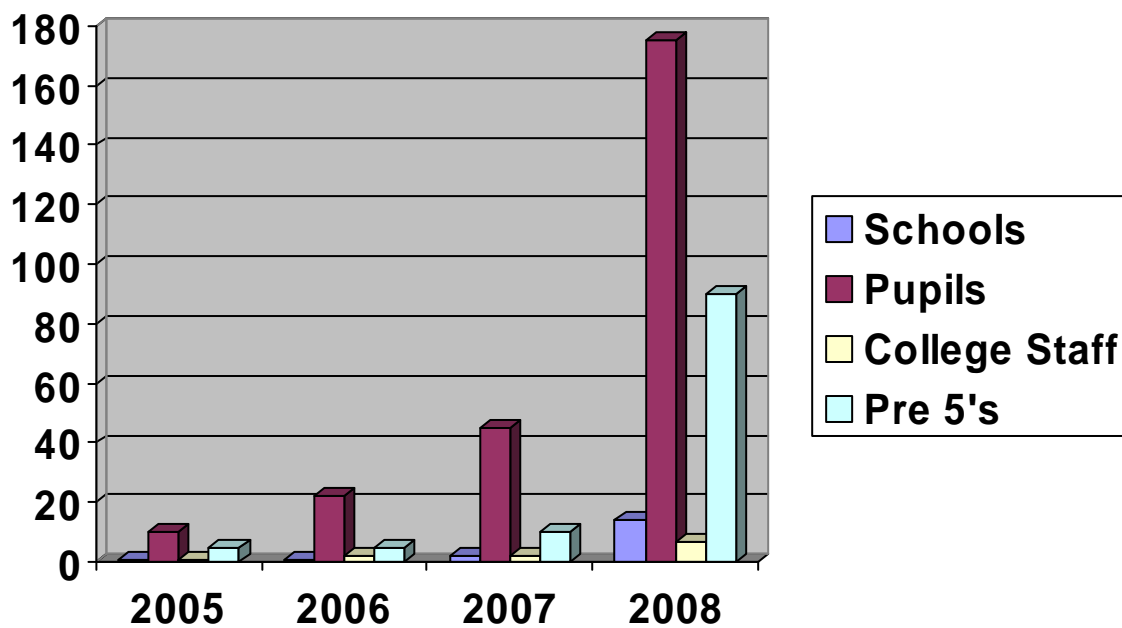
In 2005 Langside College was approached by the Head Teacher of Smithycroft Secondary School in the East End of Glasgow .He wanted to explore the possibility of delivery of a Childcare Vocational Option to S3 pupils. His aim was to be able to offer a childcare-focused experience which would include an extensive work experience element. College staff therefore developed a suitable programme and the first or pilot programme began in 2005.

The aim was to incorporate a Vocational Option route within the school timetable. Langside College would deliver the Skills Active Making Choices Programme followed by two Intermediate 1 modules drawn from current childcare awards. Initially this was offered to 10 S3 pupils who had expressed an interest in exploring a career in the childcare field. It was decided that a different approach to teaching would be applied to help engage pupils and an emphasis on not only their academic abilities but also their life skills approach was taken. Past experience has shown that a great deal of time and expense is involved when school pupils travel to colleges to undertake their college option session. It was therefore agreed that a lecturer from Langside College would deliver underpinning knowledge and the skills needed to work in the childcare environment within Smithycroft Secondary School.

Smithycroft Secondary School has an excellent reputation for partnership working and has strong links with its Learning Community services. This was a vital component in the possible success of this programme. We approached five pre-5 establishments within the community to invite them to join in this venture and asked them to provide placements for school pupils on a fortnightly basis over a two year period. On alternate weeks a lecturer from Langside College delivered the theory to support this experience allowing pupils to make the connection. All parties involved felt this was truly an example of partnership working to improve community learning and support the individuals within it.

The Making Choices course is not only a possible pathway to a future career but is also an opportunity for individuals to self determine their future. Although not all opt to move forward into a career in childcare a great many do progress into FE as they have been encouraged to encompass the notion of Life Long Learning. Pupils are actively encouraged to engage within placement in their local community. Pupils are greatly empowered by the ability to make their own choice of how and when they engage with the wider community. This option has allowed pupils to become actively involved in real work situations. While on placement their life skills are closely monitored. They are expected to display a mature approach by accepting responsibility for their timekeeping and attendance. Furthermore pupils are actively involved in working as part of an established childcare team.

In class, pupils are encouraged to debate, contribute and relate placement experiences to written work and this approach helps keep pupils motivated and focused. Working in close partnership with the Pastoral Care team at the school was essential to ensure success of the initiative. To date this excellent example of collaborative partnership working has resulted in the project going from strength to strength as it has rolled out across many schools within Glasgow City.



**Programme Growth 2005-2008**

### **6.3 Adam Smith College and Buckhaven High School**

#### **The Course – What do the pupils do?**

Business Education is the main provider of in-school Skills for Work in Buckhaven High School. Their course allows pupils to focus on their own area of interest, developing their knowledge of that particular industry through the creation and development of their own company. Pupils complete assessment evidence which ensures that they are certificated in the Enterprise and Employability Award, thus further rewarding them for their efforts and hard work during the course in school, not just for work at college. Although elements of the course can be studied individually, the whole course allows pupils to continue to build upon their previous knowledge and experience and progress to a successful completion and business plan ready to present to a team of ‘Dragons’ at the end of the two year period. Engagement with employers will be strengthened further as the project progresses.

The course also gives pupils the opportunity to discuss what they do at college, their successes and the way forward. This helps them to see connections between school and college and improve their own self-worth. Class teachers visit pupils in college too.

There are many opportunities to develop a good range of core, essential, ‘soft’ and employability skills through the diverse range of activities. Pupils/learners are reminded that practical skills alone are not sufficient to succeed in employment and life by ensuring pupils understand the need for the development of employability skills to enhance and support the skills gained at college.

Some of the activities that the learners undertake are:

- writing tasks, talks, presentations and radio broadcasts for communication skills
- personal and business financial calculations to develop numeracy skills
- studying e-commerce, website creation, graphic communication for IT skills
- boosting self-awareness, self-belief and self-confidence through self-reflection and target setting and teacher/learner appraisal meetings
- decision-making, risk taking and finding solutions
- working with others and supporting one another in class as well as working in business partnerships to develop teamwork skills
- planning, organising and recognising the importance of the quality of work
- opportunities to develop leadership qualities by leading teams and peer group through positive examples of behaviour and achievement
- learning to appreciate ‘the bigger picture’ by looking at workplace legalities and health and safety importance and implications.

#### **Self-Reflection – How do we know we’re succeeding?**

Regular self reflection is also a built in part of the course and pupils are encouraged to reflect positively on their progress and set individual targets.

Pupils are also given the opportunity to provide feedback on materials and lessons and on ways in which the course could be improved. These have all been very positive and pupils and teachers all value and see the relevance of what they are learning. Many have even commented that they would prefer more courses to be of this nature.

### **The Belief!**

Part of the success of the course, we believe is down to the fact that there is a shared passion and belief in the whole concept of Skills for Work within the department. This can be observed through the passion, time and commitment staff in the department gives, not only to the preparation and planning of lessons and course materials but also to raising expectations, believing and encouraging every pupil on the course.

Skills for Work is not an add on extra within Buckhaven High School. Senior management, Guidance and importantly, Business Education staff, firmly believe in the value of both the college and school based elements. We have it firmly embedded into our curriculum as a successful model which works for us.

## 7. Appendix: Focus Groups Electronic Voting Results

