



Learning to Succeed in Clackmannanshire in the 21st century

The original Learning to Succeed in Clackmannanshire was written in April 2000 yet, despite, the large number of educational initiatives which have been introduced in the last seven years and the rapidly changing global economy, its fundamental principles still hold true today. *Learning to Succeed in Clackmannanshire in the 21st century*, therefore, seeks to uphold those original principles, whilst at the same time recognizing and taking account of those changes that have taken place in the world of education over the last ten years.

At the same time, Clackmannanshire Council's vision for education in the 21st century takes account of global and national considerations as well as local interests and needs. Therefore, 'Learning must not only enable everyone to build up a strong body of knowledge and understanding but also promote a commitment to considered judgement and to ethical action' (*Curriculum for Excellence, p11*)

In an age of rapid and constant technological change, the role of education is to ensure that individuals are equipped with the necessary life and work skills to adapt and thrive, whilst at the same time demonstrating a readiness to play their part as responsible citizens..

Context



At the time of writing, Clackmannanshire is the smallest mainland authority in Scotland and has a population of 48,000. The local population composition is one of a declining birth rate, a declining population base and an increasing proportion of older people. The decline in population is projected to become more pronounced post 2016. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, published in 2003, identifies 16.5% of Clackmannanshire's population as living

in the 10% most deprived wards in Scotland. Traditionally, Clackmannanshire has had a low level of school leaver entry to Higher and Further Education, although recent figures for Further Education have shown an upturn. Youth unemployment continues to be a significant issue. School leaver destination information shows that boys are more likely than girls to become not in education, employment or training.

Despite this, Clackmannanshire has an attractive environment and a good location in the middle of the Central Belt.



The council's efforts to promote growth and regeneration have resulted in the re-opening of the Stirling-Alloa-Kinross railway (which should take place in 2007), a second crossing over the River Forth and a wave of new housebuilding. Measures to improve health have had a positive impact on the lives of people in Clackmannanshire.

On the educational front, the last seven years has seen a number of initiatives receiving national and international recognition. Areas of innovative practice highlighted by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education include Synthetic Phonics and the Thinking Through Philosophy programme and the delivery of Physical Education in primary schools by a PE team has been recognised as an example of good practice nationally.

International research over the last 35 years has shown that social disadvantage, when linked to low prior attainment, accounts for up to 70% of the variance in pupil attainment across schools. Scottish research confirms that schools can make a difference and that 'value added' schools can be found in areas of disadvantage.

Educational success, therefore, offers the prospect of breaking the cycle of deprivation which affects too many families in Clackmannanshire and elsewhere. Ensuring continuing access to learning offers individuals the opportunity to maintain and build on their early successes and to be able to

compete effectively in the emerging global economy and to lead fulfilled, independent lives.

High Quality Learning for All

Learning does not only take place in schools: successful communities offer continuing opportunities to learn from earliest childhood to old age. Learning involves developing our emotional intelligence along with our ability to think and act. It also needs to be based on secure and shared values. This requires a focus on the development of interpersonal skills, such as handling conflict, showing sensitivity to the needs of others and working effectively with them. All learning communities should, therefore, promote an ethos of social responsibility and respect, as well as care for self and others.

For learning to be effective, it must be relevant to learners and meet their interests and needs. Opportunities to learn flexibly and in different locations will increase through new technologies as well as in response to individual and local interests and needs. For example, all learners benefit considerably from

learning experiences tailored to their circumstances; community based projects involving learners of all ages may involve a number of locations and forms of participation.



People are more likely to learn when they feel good about themselves and are highly motivated. Optimism, resilience, confidence and the opportunity to experience success are vitally important. All school staff, working with partner agencies, should promote and ensure a strong sense of equality and fairness in all areas of learning to ensure that discrimination is challenged and that diversity in the school community and beyond is valued.

Irrespective of where the learning takes place, learners who feel successful, confident and responsible will contribute effectively to their schools and their communities. Schools should recognize and value these contributions and achievements, both within school and the wider community. High quality

learning involves learners in the process and increases their skills both as co-operative and as independent learners. As a consequence of this investment in learning, the achievements and skills developed will raise attainment for all learners.

Some learners may lack self-confidence, particularly at transition times within and between schools or during transitions that emanate from personal circumstances. Maintaining continuity and progression in learning during such times will help learners to be confident, creative, enterprising and prepared for the world of work and their future careers.

Partnerships



Every establishment in Clackmannanshire is part of a learning community. All members – learners, their families, external agencies, employers and the broader community – have something to give to the quality of the learners' experience. Schools play an important role in developing and maintaining positive and professional

relationships with all those associated with their communities.

This means having robust structures for effective liaison and consultation that will promote a healthy and socially inclusive communities. These, in turn, will support networks in which people can learn from and with each other. Adults and young people who become actively engaged in the life of their communities can rediscover an interest in informal or formal learning.

Health and Well-being

Promoting healthy living is integral to the culture of learning communities. Everyone is entitled to feel safe and that their physical, social, spiritual, mental and emotional well being, in relation to themselves, society and the environment, is being taken into account. In particular, provision of improved nutrition, increased access to physical activity and effective responses to issues of mental health and well-being are fundamental to the overall health and well-being of all members of the learning community.

Staff who feel valued and who know that their health and well-being is important within the workplace are well placed to promote the health and well-being of others through their formal and informal contributions and relationships.

The health and well-being of children and young people can be further enhanced by offering a curriculum which includes a wide range of enrichment activities. These might include, for example, community based projects that reflect active citizenship, enterprise activities, public performances of drama, dance and music and participation in a range of sporting activities.

Leadership

The most important resource in any establishment is its people. Crucial to the provision of high quality learning is high quality leadership.

All staff and learners should be given the opportunity to exercise leadership and to be innovative in a culture where they feel empowered to take lead roles within and beyond the classroom.

Central to the needs of staff will be high quality continuous professional development opportunities where they

can re-engage with key aspects of learning.

As expressed in the original Learning to Succeed in Clackmannanshire, it is still true to say that, despite the educational changes which have taken place over the last ten years, it is the outcomes which are of paramount importance rather than the means by which they are achieved. In conjunction with the Council's Policy for Effective Learning and Teaching, Learning to Succeed in Clackmannanshire recognises diversity in learning strategies and endeavours to translate these principles to best meet the needs of their learners and their community. Schools, and indeed all educational institutions, are unique by nature. They should continue to reflect on the impact of their own policies and practices and be prepared to adapt Learning to Succeed in Clackmannanshire in the 21st century to best meet the needs of their learners and their community.