

WORKING TOGETHER

CROSS-SECTORAL PROVISION
OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
FOR SCOTLAND'S SCHOOL
PUPILS

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FOREWORD

Determining an appropriate role for vocational education in Scotland's schools has been a significant and longstanding issue for educational policy.

Too often it has been interpreted as specific vocational training for a distinct group of young people. As we reconsider the curriculum through *A Curriculum for Excellence* we need to ensure that effective preparation for working life is a key component of every young person's education.

Scottish Ministers' priorities for growth in the Scottish economy place a new importance on vocational education in shaping the workforce of the future. The need for productive partnerships between schools, colleges and other organisations lies at the heart of new vocational education initiatives. This report reviews existing arrangements for the delivery of vocational courses to school pupils, mainly in colleges, and examines the quality of pupils' learning experiences on these courses.

The number of education authorities with comprehensive arrangements for delivering vocational education across all schools is increasing. Almost all secondary schools have made some provision for vocational education for pupils in S3-S4. The range of courses is expanding and there is greater opportunity for certification of success. Information for pupils, parents and carers is better than it has been in the past. Schools are becoming more sophisticated in their selection of pupils for vocational courses in colleges. Most pupils enjoy their learning experiences in colleges and other venues and these experiences enhance their development of skills for employability and contribute to personal growth.

There are, however, a number of significant areas for improvement in current practice. Not all education authorities have developed their strategic leadership of vocational education sufficiently. Only a few schools promote vocational education as potentially appropriate for all levels of pupil ability. Poor selection procedures in too many schools lead to high drop-out rates from vocational courses. Opportunities for pupils in S5 and S6 to continue the vocational studies begun in S3 and S4 are poor. Very few schools plan regular meetings between school and college staff involved at the operational level to monitor and review the day-to-day management of cohorts of school pupils. Most school teachers are not well enough informed about the learning activities and experiences of their pupils on vocational courses delivered away from the school and are unable therefore to relate these experiences directly to work within school. Partnerships do not evaluate systematically the quality of learning and teaching on vocational courses.

The report makes a number of recommendations for the future, which are in harmony with the directions set out in the recently published National Strategy and guide for school-college partnerships. They relate to strategic leadership, educational gain for all pupils, communication with pupils, parents and carers, pupil selection procedures, and quality assurance and improvement.

Graham Donaldson
Her Majesty's Senior Chief Inspector
HM Inspectorate of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The provision of programmes of vocational education for school pupils in Scotland has been a feature of links between schools and colleges for many years. Scottish Ministers have confirmed their commitment to the inclusion of vocational education opportunities in the 14-16 curriculum with the publication of *Lifelong Partners*¹, their strategy for school-college partnerships. This strategy includes the following statement.

All secondary and special schools in Scotland will by 2007 have effective, meaningful and appropriate partnership with at least one college for S3 pupils and above.

For many schools and colleges, such partnerships already exist, some more formally than others. Many of these partnerships came about as a result of the publication of the Scottish Executive's *Guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum*². For other schools and colleges, new partnerships will need to be created.

In 2002, the Scottish Executive launched the National Debate on Education. The Scottish Executive response to the debate undertook to:

*Increase access to vocational qualifications and strengthen the links between schools, colleges and workplaces.*³

In March 2003, Scottish Ministers accepted the recommendations contained in the *Determined to Succeed*⁴ report, a review of education for work and enterprise. Among its recommendations was the following.

All pupils over the age of 14 must have an opportunity for work-based vocational learning linked to accompanying relevant qualifications. This will require a major commitment from Scotland's employers, working closely with local authorities and secondary schools.

In November 2003, Ministers established a curriculum review group which reported its findings in *A Curriculum for Excellence*⁵. This report, published in November 2004, undertook to develop:

More skills-for-work options for young people, robustly assessed and helping them to progress into further qualifications or work.

Most recently, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has introduced a number of courses under its *Skills for Work* programme. These courses are designed to provide school pupils with a range of vocational education experiences along with the development of employability skills. Pilot schemes of delivery of courses in construction and craft skills, financial services, sport and recreation, and early education and childcare began in August 2005.

¹ *Lifelong Partners: Scotland's Schools and Colleges Building the Foundations of a Lifelong Learning Society: A Strategy for Partnership*, Scottish Executive, May 2005, ISBN 0 7559 4629 4 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/12141846/18473>

² *Guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum*, Circular 3/2001, Scottish Executive Education Department, August 2001

³ *Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity: The Executive's Response to the National Debate*, Scottish Executive, January 2003 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/ndser-00.asp>

⁴ *Determined to Succeed, A Review of Enterprise in Education*, Scottish Executive, 2002, <http://www.determinedtosucceed.co.uk/>

⁵ *A Curriculum for Excellence*, Scottish Executive, November 2004, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/cerv-00.asp>

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INTRODUCTION

To help schools and colleges to manage better their partnerships for vocational education and in response to an undertaking in *Lifelong Partners*, HMIE has recently published a self-evaluation guide for use with school-college partnerships⁶.

Against this background of policy initiatives, it is timely to examine the current state of play in vocational education for school pupils in S3 and above. This report derives from HMIE inspection and other activities up to the end of the 2004/05 school session. HM Inspectors drew on the findings of published reports and carried out fieldwork in a sample of education authorities, secondary schools, further education colleges and other training providers. They held discussions with a wide range of

education authority officers, school staff, including head teachers, other school managers and teachers, and college managers and teaching staff. They also interviewed pupils who had participated in, or were participating in, vocational programmes delivered by their local college or other provider.

The report describes and evaluates the planning processes in which schools, education authorities and colleges engage. It describes current provision and identifies strengths and areas for improvement. It examines factors which contribute to successful vocational education. Finally, the report makes a number of recommendations for improvement and enhancement.

⁶ *How good is our school? School-college Partnership*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2005
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosscp.doc>

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2.1 Education authorities

All education authorities had introduced measures designed to implement the aims of the Scottish Executive Circular 3/2001 on flexibility in the curriculum. Many of these measures involved the creation of new partnerships to facilitate the delivery of courses of vocational education to school pupils. Partners with education authorities in planning for vocational education included secondary schools, colleges, Careers Scotland, council departments including those responsible for community learning, SQA, employers and private training providers. These partnership arrangements had contributed to a more strategic approach to the planning for vocational education and, in a few authorities, to the design of vocational courses available across all secondary schools.

Education authorities had set up a range of groups to promote effective partnership working. These liaison and working groups provided a forum for discussion of, and planning for, a range of issues, including common timetabling across schools, co-ordination of college activity, collaboration across council departments and monitoring of pilot programmes. In most cases, these groups facilitated collaboration between schools and providers but did not initiate or manage authority-wide programmes of vocational education. Education authority staff involved with these groups included secondary school managers, enterprise development officers, education services senior managers, and managers from other local council departments, including personnel and building services.

A number of education authorities had moved from an ad hoc approach to a more strategic and authority-wide approach to provision of vocational education. In general, this more strategic approach was at an early stage of development and it was too early to evaluate effectively the benefits to pupils.

2.2 Secondary schools

The majority of secondary schools had made some provision of vocational courses for pupils in S3 and S4 but very few schools had courses of vocational education for pupils in the senior school.

Schools varied in their aims and purpose for their vocational education provision. All schools stated that their approach was pupil centred but these claims were often undermined by a lack of pupil involvement in planning, a narrow range of choice for vocational options, a tendency by most school managers to promote vocational education to pupils of lower attainment and a reliance by schools on their local college to determine and develop the offer of provision.

The following quotations by school staff were typical of the range of schools' thinking in relation to vocational education.

The school looks to provide new opportunities and is active in vocational partnerships to prepare pupils for employment or further education. The school gives S6 pupils opportunity to participate in open learning courses.

The school has not implemented curriculum flexibility to any real extent. Its curriculum review group explored in 2003/04 alternatives for pupils for whom eight Standard Grades may not be appropriate. The review group concluded that significant changes were inappropriate given uncertainties over staffing.

Currently in S3/4 no vocational options as yet but planning for the future with local college; for S5/6 there is flexibility to attend college for Higher Grade psychology and for courses in media studies and music technology.

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S3 pupils are not involved at present – the school considers these pupils are not mature enough to cope with the college experience and the less structured approach, and the issue of independent travel of some 25 miles.

The college's local centre works successfully with less able and vulnerable pupils – the college gives individual attention to these pupils and places emphasis on developing life and social skills.

We ask the college what they can give us.

Almost all schools relied on their vocational education partners to provide specialist equipment and accommodation for vocational courses. This meant that almost all courses were delivered out of school on the premises of the partners. These partners were mostly local colleges but included a few other providers. However, in one education authority, a programme of equipment procurement for schools had established specialist accommodation in motor vehicle engineering, call centre training and construction to be delivered by teaching staff from the local college.

A few education authorities had planned vocational provision in construction in a partnership which included not only local colleges but also council departments such as those dealing with building services. The authorities had designed these arrangements to provide realistic working environments for school pupils studying construction courses but in some cases paid insufficient attention to providing effective channels for communication among the partners. As a result, opportunities for effective planning for maximum educational gain for pupils were missed. One common consequence was that pupils and schools were unaware of the extent of classroom-based learning in vocational courses. Poor communication

had also resulted in inappropriate decisions by one authority to offer SVQ provision.

2.3 Colleges

All colleges gave a high priority to maintaining effective links with schools and education authorities. A few colleges reported that joint planning with schools and education authorities had become more strategic, with joint decision making between senior managers in colleges and authorities. However, many colleges worked directly with individual schools on arrangements to identify and deliver vocational courses.

Within the constraints of their funding arrangements, the majority of colleges offered a wide range of provision. However, in some cases where numbers of pupils were small, colleges offered provision only on the basis of pupils fitting into spare places in an existing class, generally referred to as infill provision. Schools preferred provision to be in discrete cohorts, especially for S3 and S4 pupils.

A number of colleges and other providers had acquired funding from sources other than the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) for their courses for school pupils. These sources of funding included the European Union, Better Neighbourhood Services, Community Regeneration and Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP). Such funding had enabled colleges and other providers to offer provision that would not otherwise have been possible but the funding was usually for a fixed term and provision was not always sustainable. This short-term provision did not meet the needs of schools for a stable and reliably-available portfolio of courses to offer to pupils. A number of schools and education authorities used funding from *Determined to Succeed* to fund vocational education in colleges and other venues.

A few colleges had recognised the need for a sustainable programme of vocational provision for school pupils and had incorporated planning for this provision into their mainstream operational planning and budgeting.

2.4 Frameworks for pupil choice

Almost all secondary schools required S3 and S4 pupils to study eight subjects. In the majority of these schools, seven or eight of the choices were SQA Standard Grade courses. In a few schools, the eighth choice comprised modular or short courses, often drawn from the SQA national catalogue of non-advanced units at Access or Intermediate levels. In almost all schools which offered vocational courses to S3 and S4 pupils, the vocational course was an alternative to one Standard Grade course. In a very few schools, vocational education was an extra subject of study, fitted in around the pupils' normal timetable.

Schools that planned well for vocational courses in S3 and S4 placed the vocational option in pupils' S3 course choice framework. Often, the vocational option appeared in the same column as modular or short courses. In many schools, there was not a clear rationale for the placing of vocational courses in a particular column and for the resulting portfolio of courses for all pupils in S3 and S4. In many cases, the vocational option competed with such subjects as craft and design, computing, home economics and graphic communication. Such arrangements safeguarded balance across the portfolio of Standard Grade subjects but did not allow pupils with an interest in applied learning to take, for example, a vocational course together with craft and design. In many schools, all choices in all columns were available to all pupils in S3 but, in practice, schools guided pupils towards choices based on aptitude and ability. Typically, most of the participating S3 and S4 pupils were boys.

A few schools were more innovative in providing appropriate vocational courses for pupils. In one school, a vocational pathways programme, delivered in partnership with the local college, had been introduced in 2001. The programme targeted pupils for whom the study of eight Standard Grade courses was considered inappropriate. They studied vocational options for two half days per week in college while spending the rest of the time in school on six Standard Grade or other National Courses. Each pupil chose four separate vocational options for study at college. This broad combination of school and college provision was intended to provide an attractive and appropriate range of courses and to prepare pupils for the transition from school to work or college.

A very small number of S3 and S4 pupils were following full-time programmes of study in local colleges. Typically these pupils represented less than 3% of the year group. Schools selected them with the agreement of the education authorities and parents/carers. Selection was on the basis of their ability to benefit from a college-based education and where it was clear that their school experience was no longer fully relevant to their needs.

A large number of schools allowed their pupils with a school leaving date in the December after S4 to attend college full-time between August and December. Colleges often provided effective progression opportunities for such pupils through continuing full-time provision at National Qualification (NQ) level between January and June after the pupil had left school, with further progression opportunities in the following year.

Very few schools offered vocational provision to S5 and S6 pupils in the same way as that offered to S3 and S4. A number of informally timetabled work placement arrangements were in place but there

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was no systematic planning for progression within a chosen vocational area for S5 and S6 pupils who had followed a vocational course in S3 and S4.

Almost all colleges offered taster courses in a wide range of vocational areas. These taster courses varied in format and delivery. Typically, they ran in May and in June and were helpful in preparing pupils for study at college and in helping pupils to choose their vocational course. In one school, which did not start its vocational courses until S4, the pupils' entire S4 experience in college consisted of a number of taster courses which allowed them to make well-informed decisions about vocational education in S5 and S6, or after they had left school. In some cases, they were targeted at S2 pupils and were of very short duration, usually of one day and in a single subject area. In other cases, they formed a more sustained pattern of attendance at college up to a whole academic session. Such arrangements gave S3 pupils, usually on a half-day attendance per week, experience of a range of occupational areas from which they could more effectively choose a single area to specialise in when they reached S4. For example, in one college, a group of S3 pupils studied a suite of subjects comprising floristry, catering, PE and computing while another group studied joinery, gardening, PE and computing. Pupils at a training centre followed courses in engineering and related subjects including physics, mathematics and graphics. Most pupils felt that their needs were met although these taster courses included aspects of work that they had no desire to follow. In general, pupils valued the taster courses because they offered opportunities to experience a number of occupational areas before committing to a longer programme in one area.

S3 and S4 pupils were generally not involved at the planning stages and were unable to influence the range of provision from which they could choose.

However, they understood clearly the links between the courses they were following and their own interests and aptitudes. Pupils generally wanted to have a greater say than they already had in the choice of courses offered as tasters. They indicated that they would have liked:

- the opportunity to negotiate their vocational course;
- to participate in some alternative courses including ICT; and
- to participate in more taster courses.

Many pupils also indicated that they would welcome the possibility of changing their course after beginning it if it was not in line with their expectations.

In one large urban programme, young people had a choice in relation to which strand of the programme they joined but a few pupils did not get their first choice. Most expressed a wish to *get out of school*, to *get help to get a job*, or to experience a range of vocational activities different from the normal school work. Once on the programme, more than a few decided that they did not enjoy or benefit from their vocational course and returned to school. Schools found that this arrangement worked satisfactorily only for pupils who made an early decision to return to school.

A small number of pupils in one school benefited from a programme mix designed to address their additional support needs. Pupils followed an alternative programme in place of one Standard Grade subject and a vocational course in place of another. The alternative programme included Access 3 French, *PC Passport*, *Successmaker*, and a range of life skills.

2.5 Information and guidance for pupils, parents and carers

All schools had procedures to inform pupils, parents and carers of the range of options for pupils moving from S2 to S3 and from S4 to S5 and S6. Key staff in providing information included pastoral care teams and principal teachers of guidance and support for learning. Headteachers and depute headteachers also played an important role in informing pupils of options during school assemblies.

In a large number of schools, parents and carers attended information evenings before their children made their choices in S2. This was not generally the case for pupils moving into S5 and S6. Occasional open evenings, at which college staff and representatives from Careers Scotland were present, helped parents and carers to understand fully the range of options open to their children. At some of these events, parents and carers were able to meet and talk to older pupils who had chosen a vocational option for S3 and S4.

Schools issued a range of documentation to pupils to inform them of the choices available. All schools had produced options booklets which informed pupils, parents and carers of the nature and content of Standard Grade subjects. However, only a few schools had included details of vocational courses available at college, other than that these courses were available. This lack of information about vocational courses was not helpful to pupils as they decided on their subjects in S3. Similarly, only a few schools had produced helpful information booklets on vocational options for pupils progressing from S4 to S5 and from S5 to S6. Most colleges had produced an information booklet for school pupils but not all pupils had seen these booklets.

Schools deployed appropriate staff to guide pupils in making a choice of vocational course. In schools where disaffected pupils had access to vocational courses in colleges, principal teachers of support for learning played a key role. In other schools, guidance staff were responsible for advising pupils on the choice of vocational courses. In more than a few schools, there was a clear policy of guiding more academically able pupils away from a choice of vocational courses in S3. In other cases, the headteacher pointed out to pupils the benefits of vocational education for all by referring, for example, to the relevance of construction programmes for pupils interested in becoming architects or surveyors. This approach was found in very few schools.

In one school, pupils unable to cope with the full range of eight Standard Grade subjects were identified in S2 by staff providing services in support of pupils, including those with experience of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school operated a broad-banding system to form classes and all pupils for vocational courses were selected from the lowest-attaining band. In another school, targeted groups were those pupils requiring considerable educational support as well as some disaffected pupils.

In contrast, one inner city school did not allow pupils with high levels of unauthorised absence to take vocational courses nor did it allow pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to participate. The pupils selected were those deemed most likely to benefit from a vocational course. Elsewhere, an education authority stated that its target group was those pupils expected to have a grade point average of between 2 and 3 at Standard Grade.

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Most schools identified pupils with poor chances of achieving good awards in Standard Grade courses as most suitable for vocational education, although the available vocational courses were often at Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2 levels, the equivalent of Standard Grade General and Credit levels. However, in some cases, school staff advising pupils on their options recognised that the level of vocational courses available to them was usually at Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 and advised pupils accordingly. Almost all pupils in S3 and S4 on one large authority-wide programme had a Standard Grade profile which included planned presentations at General or Credit levels.

Typical school statements concerning pupil selection and guidance for vocational provision included the following.

Currently, 20 pupils in S3 and 20 in S4 attend college courses but this will be increased to around 70 in next year's S3. The overwhelming majority are boys – only 10% in S3 and 20% in S4 are girls. These pupils would generally be expected to achieve five to six awards at General or Foundation Standard Grade or Access 3.

Targeted groups are those requiring considerable educational support and some disaffected pupils. In addition to these pupils, a number of pupils attend a local private training provider for tuition in engineering-related subjects. These pupils have the potential to achieve technician-level qualifications and have strong desires to follow careers in the engineering field but have no wish to follow university degree courses.

Motivated pupils of appropriate ability undertake vocational pathways programme. Disaffected pupils or ones who cannot cope with eight Standard Grades follow an alternative curriculum which includes college courses. Pupils with social, emotional and behavioural

difficulties are often not identified for college courses. If pupils' behaviour in college is problematic they are withdrawn. In future years, the college will specify a minimum level of prior attainment for pupils attending their courses. This may make it more difficult for pupils with such additional support needs to gain entry.

The school offers vocational education to those most likely to benefit from it, but across the ability range. These will mostly be young people who might pursue that area through an apprenticeship etc or, in a few cases, people who might be quite academic but with an interest in the subject.

The school's main involvement in vocational education is in S3 which is currently part of a pilot programme organised by the authority. The school has targeted S3 pupils who are likely to leave school at 16 with 5+ General awards.

Schools were generally aware of the level, in NQ or related terms, of the vocational courses available from their local college. They were also aware of their obligations to provide a coherent educational experience for pupils up to the end of S6. However, they felt that opportunities for appropriate progression after the S3 and S4 vocational course to further related work in S5 and S6 were generally poor. In particular, appropriate progression opportunities in S5 to Higher were not readily available. Therefore, for more able pupils, the choice of a vocational course limited the range of Higher options in S5. This was an important factor for schools in their guidance to more academically able pupils.

In more than a few schools, pupils had become more directly involved in choosing vocational education. Formerly, guidance teachers had selected pupils based on their knowledge of individual pupils' ability and interest in vocational

courses. Recognising that colleges were well placed to identify pupils who would benefit from a vocational course, these schools had introduced a process whereby pupils applied to the college and went through an interview process, in consultation with Careers Scotland and with parents and carers. S5/S6 pupils followed the same process and, in one school, benefited additionally from an interview with a member of staff from Careers Scotland. These processes were helpful in the development of life skills and skills for employability.

Careers Scotland was working increasingly successfully with a number of education authorities and with individual schools to enhance the provision of advice and guidance to pupils. It took an active role in advising pupils about vocational courses and on employability issues in general.

A large number of schools planned work experience placements for pupils, generally of one week's duration in S4. Schools informed parents and carers effectively about these schemes and were careful to comply with requirements related to insurance and health and safety when setting up work placements. In a few schools, pupils found their own work placements, often as a result of their links with employers through part-time work. Schools attempted to link work placements to the vocational area that pupils studied at college.

A few rural education authorities reported difficulties in recruiting sufficient employers to meet the demand for work experience from their schools and pupils.

In a few schools, the preparation for study at college involved pupils in attending a college induction day, usually in June. For pupils in most other schools who had selected vocational courses in colleges, no such induction programme was available.

In most schools, arrangements to inform parents and carers about their children's progress on their vocational course were not well developed. Parents' evenings, at which the school discussed pupil progress with parents and carers, did not normally involve college staff and parents and carers had no opportunity to discuss their children's progress.

Generally, pupils stated that they felt sufficiently well-informed about their options to make an effective choice of vocational course. They felt disappointed, however, that the experience of studying and learning at college did not always match their expectations. In particular, many had expected far less theory and classroom-based activity than had been the case. There was a mistaken assumption among pupils that a college course consisted only of practical activities. School staff in the main did not accompany pupils to college or cooperate closely with colleges in the delivery of vocational courses. Accordingly, they were not well placed to inform pupils clearly about the balance of practical and theory work in vocational courses.

Those school staff who had accompanied pupils to college or who had otherwise engaged with colleges had gained valuable insights into the range and nature of post-compulsory education available in colleges of further education. However, the majority of school teachers did not understand fully enough such features as the structure of qualifications, the importance of SVQ, Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships and the links between NQ and Higher National courses. Very few school teachers understood clearly the links between Higher National courses and progression with advanced standing to degree programmes in universities, and thus were not well placed to advise pupils in this regard.

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In more than a few schools, there was a high drop-out rate among S3 and S4 pupils following vocational courses. Most schools in which this occurred considered that inappropriate selection procedures had contributed to the high drop-out rate and were commendably redesigning their pupil selection procedures for vocational courses.

2.6 School liaison with partners

Almost all schools had links with their local college or other provider for the management and administration of vocational education. In addition, an increasing number of education authorities had begun to seek more strategic links and to plan for a more comprehensive service for pupils. These education authorities were still in a minority and the predominant arrangement was one between individual schools and providers. A few education authorities had developed school-college partnership agreements that were helpful in colleges' planning in collaboration with a number of schools. However, in a large number of education authorities, there was no effective central co-ordination of travel arrangements, timetables, school start and finish times and funding. In many schools, the extent of the school's involvement in vocational education was strongly influenced by the importance placed on it by the headteacher.

A small number of schools were working effectively with local employers, chiefly in areas developed around provision of work placements for pupils. Schools that worked particularly effectively with their Careers Scotland link person generally had better links with local employers than schools which had limited contact with Careers Scotland. One school had collaborated effectively with a local employer who had provided resources and support for the school's enterprise activity. It was not uncommon for schools to have productive links

with local nurseries and nursery schools through the involvement of S5 and S6 pupils in weekly work placements to develop skills in childcare.

Most teachers in schools were not familiar enough with the learning experiences of pupils in colleges and elsewhere. With a few exceptions, school staff were not involved in the delivery of college courses to school pupils. In one school, teachers collaborated effectively with college lecturers to deliver vocational programmes on a team-teaching basis. This represented a major financial investment for the school but it felt that this arrangement contributed well to an effective learning experience for pupils.

Overall, few arrangements were in place for the joint delivery by schools and colleges of vocational courses. Poor communication between lecturers and schoolteachers reduced opportunities to identify where schools and colleges might collaborate in the delivery of vocational courses. In a number of vocational areas, for example in construction and hospitality, as well as in core skills, schools were well placed to deliver underpinning knowledge and understanding while colleges took the lead role in the development of practical skills and competences.

A few schools would have liked to deliver vocational courses alone, without the collaboration of colleges or other providers. These schools felt that they were best placed to deliver vocational education to their pupils because they knew the pupils well, and certainly better than college staff would. In some cases, difficulties had arisen in collaboration arrangements with colleges. These difficulties related to cancelled classes and courses, transport issues, lack of pupil support in college, and poor communication. A lack of appropriate facilities and resources for vocational education in schools was the main reason for not proceeding with such arrangements.

Very few schools had planned regular meetings with college or other provider staff after the initial meetings to set up provision. Principal teachers (subject) or heads of faculty in schools did not communicate effectively with their counterparts in colleges or other training venues to identify areas where shared information would enhance the quality of the learner experience, such as the broad range of teaching approaches appropriate to the management of learning activities for young people, prior knowledge gained at school, opportunities for common approaches to syllabus topics and use of ICT. Where meetings did take place, they dealt mainly with general organisational issues. Generally, they did not contribute effectively to the day-to-day management of the education of cohorts of school pupils.

Strengths

- All education authorities had arrangements in place to allow schools to engage with colleges in the provision of vocational education for pupils. In a few authorities, these arrangements were comprehensive and helped schools to achieve authority-wide access to vocational education. The number of authorities with such comprehensive arrangements was increasing.
 - Almost all secondary schools had made some provision for vocational programmes for pupils in S3 and S4.
 - Almost all colleges offered taster courses in a range of vocational areas to help pupils make informed choices in relation to vocational education.
- Schools, colleges and Careers Scotland cooperated well at information evenings to inform pupils, parents and carers about options for pupils entering S3. A few local authorities and colleges had produced comprehensive booklets on their vocational courses to inform pupils, parents and carers.
 - In more than a few schools, pupils went through an interview process for places on college vocational courses. This process helped to develop their employability skills.
 - A few colleges had recognised the importance of sustainability of vocational courses for school pupils and had incorporated planning for these courses into their mainstream operational planning.

Main areas for improvement

- Strategic leadership of vocational education arrangements was not sufficiently well developed in all education authorities.
- Provision often depended on allocating places to pupils on existing college courses, rather than designing provision with reference to pupils' needs and their likely preferences.
- Only a few schools promoted vocational education as appropriate for all levels of pupil ability.
- Poor selection procedures in more than a few schools had led to high drop-out rates from vocational courses.
- In general, pupils were poorly prepared for the vocational courses they had chosen in S3 and in more than a few schools, there was insufficient detailed written information on these courses available to them, their parents or carers. Not all pupils had realised the extent of theory work in their courses and most did not receive an effective induction to studying in a college.

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- Pupils who followed vocational courses in S3 and S4 rarely had appropriate progression opportunities to related provision in S5 and S6.
- Arrangements to provide information and offer opportunities for discussion to parents and carers on the progress of their children on vocational courses were not well developed.
- Most school teachers were not well enough informed about the learning activities and experiences of their pupils on vocational courses delivered away from the school.
- Very few schools had planned regular meetings between school and college staff involved at the operational level to monitor and review the day-to-day management of cohorts of school pupils.

3

3. PROVISION

3.1 Range of vocational areas

The range of vocational subjects offered to school pupils in S3 and S4 through partnership with local colleges, local council departments, notably building services departments, and a few other providers included:

- hairdressing and beauty therapy;
- construction;
- horticulture;
- care;
- health and fitness;
- customer services;
- sport and leisure;
- administration;
- engineering;
- business and IT; and
- hospitality.

Most programmes led to formal certification, mainly through qualifications awarded by the SQA. They included units and courses at Access and Intermediate levels. In a few vocational areas, such as construction and hospitality, pupils worked towards achievement of a Scottish Progression Award (SPA). In other areas, including administration and customer services, pupils worked towards elements of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ), usually at levels 1 and 2.

For pupils in S5 and S6, provision varied from school to school. Pupils generally had an option to apply to college or another provider for vocational education, and arrangements were almost always made between providers and individual schools.

The extent of provision offered by colleges depended on the availability of infill places as there were generally not enough S5 and S6 pupils to make discrete class groups. The courses offered changed from year to year according to the availability of infill places.

Typically, pupils in S5 and S6 studied subjects such as:

- photography;
- information technology;
- gamekeeping;
- drama;
- care;
- electronics;
- multimedia; and
- film making.

Many senior pupils who attended college did so to study for Higher Grade awards not available to them in school. Higher Grade subjects with a vocational content which S5 and S6 pupils studied included:

- biology;
- psychology;
- sociology;
- philosophy;
- geology; and
- drama.

Taster courses for S1 and S2 pupils generally covered vocational areas available to pupils in S3 and S4.

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PROVISION

All education authorities recognised the value to pupils of work experience and a few organised comprehensive programmes. Careers Scotland worked closely with a number of schools, particularly in large urban authorities, to promote and provide work experience opportunities. Work experience activity across a wide range of areas contributed well to pupils' understanding of the importance of developing their employability skills.

A number of initiatives under *Determined to Succeed* were contributing effectively to supporting the range of vocational education for school pupils. These included:

- using funding to build capacity in schools to deliver vocational education;
- funding of staff to co-ordinate vocational education across schools;
- liaison between education authority secondary schools manager and enterprise development officers to improve cooperation;
- operational planning groups for vocational education involving enterprise development officers;
- use of *Determined to Succeed* funding to place school auxiliary in college to provide support for pupils;
- use of *Determined to Succeed* funding to develop socialisation skills in pupils;
- development of links and partnerships between schools and employers.

3.2 Range of pupils and extent of activity

Only about 10% of S3 and S4 pupils in schools visited for this report undertook vocational education in a college or elsewhere. Participation rates ranged from none to 25% in any single year group. Typically, pupil numbers from any one school for any particular vocational area were fewer than 10. There was a wide range of Standard Grade profiles among pupils choosing vocational options. A few pupils had expectations of awards at Credit level.

Enrolments of pupils on programmes of vocational education in colleges varied widely. In the colleges visited for this report, totals of pupils in S3 to S6 ranged from below 100 to about 250. In addition to programmes which involved pupils in attendance at college on a regular basis throughout the school year, almost all colleges offered taster days. Some colleges enrolled several thousand pupils from a range of schools on one-day taster activities.

A number of colleges collaborated with local schools to offer courses in vocational education to pupils with additional support needs under SFEFC programme group 18⁷. Typically, the vocational education was included in programmes of personal development, self-help, life and social skills. One school targeted looked-after and accommodated young people for its vocational option. However, a few colleges were unable to provide staff to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. In these cases pupils with such difficulties were effectively denied access to vocational courses. One school reported that:

⁷ Programme Group 18 is an SFEFC classification of programmes designed to meet the needs of learners with additional support needs.

The college's Vocational Pathways Courses (VPC) are geared towards self-sufficient students able to access the curriculum without too much support – the college cannot staff VPC with sufficient support staff. This effectively excludes school pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

A few schools had recognised that, for pupils with a history of truancy or of emotional and behavioural difficulties, attendance at college was not a guaranteed solution to their problems. These schools weighed carefully the potential of such pupils to benefit from a vocational course before proposing a programme of study at college. For other schools, attendance for part of the school week at a college or other training venue was seen as a suitable alternative curriculum for pupils with these difficulties and their ability to benefit from vocational education was assumed rather than explored and confirmed. In these schools, the potential educational gain for pupils had not been clearly identified.

Almost all pupils in S5 and S6 following a course of study at college or elsewhere were studying at school for a mixture of qualifications including Advanced Higher and Higher courses, and National Courses at Intermediate level.

3.3 Timetabling and staffing

Most pupils in S3 and S4 who attended college or other training venue did so for a half day each week over two years. This could be accommodated readily within school arrangements for the delivery of Standard Grade courses and allowed pupils adequate time in college to overtake the learning activities of the vocational course. In addition, in a number of schools, the weekly personal and social education (PSE) class served as a useful point of contact between school staff and pupils on vocational courses. In one school, all pupils on

vocational courses attended the same PSE class, allowing school staff more in-depth monitoring of their pupils' experiences at college or training venue.

In a few schools, pupils attended college or training venue for a whole day per week and benefited from a more sustained vocational learning experience.

Almost all pupils began their S3 school programme in the June of S2, an arrangement which anticipated constructive engagement with their new courses for a full month before the summer break. College study years generally began in August. This mismatch between the date at which the school timetable changed and the date at which college classes began was a source of difficulty for many schools as they had to find alternative activities during the month of June for pupils entering S3 who had chosen a vocational course.

Where education authorities, schools and colleges had agreed a common timetabling pattern for S3 and S4 pupils, this was very helpful in establishing viable cohorts of pupils for vocational courses in colleges. At the same time, this common timetabling had the effect, in a few cases, of concentrating the attendance at college of large numbers of pupils in a single morning or afternoon. The presence of so many pupils at the same time in a college risked diluting for pupils the adult nature of their college learning experience. At the same time, this presence had the potential to alter detrimentally the ethos of the college as perceived by its adult learners.

Most vocational courses were delivered by college and other staff on college premises, including outreach centres, and in training venues. In a few education authorities, college teaching staff travelled to schools to deliver courses. Other agencies delivered a small number of courses in areas such as amenity horticulture and motor vehicle engineering.

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These agencies included community learning departments of local councils and other training providers.

Those few school teachers who had accompanied their pupils to their college or training venue benefited greatly from the insight they gained into the learning experiences of pupils and were well placed to identify quickly emerging issues of behaviour and attendance, and to work effectively with college and training provider staff to resolve problems. In all but a very few schools, headteachers cited cost as the most important factor in their decision not to use teaching staff to accompany pupils. Limited availability of supply cover in schools was a related factor.

3.4 Support for pupils

Pupils who had gone through a period of induction prior to the start of their course found that it helped them to settle into college life. Others who received induction only after arriving at college to start their course were less sure about aspects of college life such as location of classrooms and workshops, refectory arrangements, and use of social areas.

In many cases, schools had identified pupils who required additional support and suitable arrangements were in place to provide necessary support in the college or training venue. This support usually took the form of an accompanying member of the school support staff who stayed with the pupils throughout their attendance at college. A few schools had designated a member of the teaching staff to make appropriate arrangements for pupil support as need arose.

Colleges stated that they communicated to pupils the range of support services available to them in college but most pupils were not aware of this range of services and very few had made use of them.

Pupils following elements of SVQ programmes in employers' premises were generally well supported by visiting tutors and assessors, who were proactive in encouraging pupils to build their portfolios of evidence.

Arrangements to transport pupils to colleges and training venues were generally adequate. In large urban local councils this was a complex but practicable undertaking. In rural areas where colleges and schools were not geographically adjacent, the undertaking was costly, time-consuming and not always feasible for pupils from very remote schools. Education authorities were considering with colleges how the requirement for pupils to travel long distances could be avoided. Possible solutions involved the use of college outreach centres, travelling lecturers and the use of videoconferencing. There was some use of college outreach centres and college lecturers taught in a few schools but there had been little use to date of videoconferencing.

Most current transport arrangements worked well, although there were a few cases of disruptive behaviour on buses. In rural areas where distances between schools and colleges were great, these distances were a major inhibiting factor in the provision of vocational education. A few pupils resented their late return from their training venue. This could be as late as 5.00pm and pupils compared this unfavourably with their normal finish time in school of around 3.30pm. For a few pupils, this represented their first encounter with the reality of the world of work. Senior pupils generally had discretion to make their own arrangements for transport to and from the college or training venue.

3.5 Pupils' learning experiences

Almost all pupils appreciated the informal atmosphere of a college. Some liked the large size of their local college in comparison with the small size of their school. They felt that this helped them to grow in self-confidence as they found that they were more able to take more responsibility for their own conduct and behaviour than when in school.

College lecturers received much praise. A sample of comments from pupils following college-based programmes follows.

I enjoyed being treated like an adult.

College courses are interesting and better than school.

The tutors give good support when you need it.

Tutors discuss the course with you.

Lecturers know their stuff and are well prepared.

College is more chilled out.

On the other hand, a few pupils criticised lecturers for leaving them on their own without supervision. As well as tutors who discussed the course with pupils, there were a few others who did not. A few pupils found college lecturers to be more reactive and less proactive than their schoolteachers. For a few pupils, lecturers were too *laid back*. A few schoolteachers considered that some of their pupils were not coping particularly well with three-hour classes in college and that college teaching staff did not give enough attention to the capacity for concentration and application in pupils as young as 14 years of age.

More than a few pupils reported that, at times, the organisation of their practical activities was poor and that there were occasions when tutors failed to make a timeous start to the learning activities, apparently because of lack of advance preparation.

All pupils recognised that colleges and training centres often gave them access to equipment and resources to which they did not have access in school. Such access to high quality equipment and realistic working environments was a major motivating factor for pupils. However, in a few cases, pupils complained that the accommodation for practical activities was cramped for the number of learners. A few pupils on courses based in council leisure centres complained that there was too narrow a range of equipment on which to practise their skills.

More than a few pupils who had followed college courses stated that they now knew much more than before about the range of qualifications open to them after they left school. They now understood more about SVQ, HNC and HND and the links between these qualifications and such programmes as Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships.

Pupils studying for units of a SVQ combined placement experience of a real working environment such as an office, a kitchen, or a sports centre with regular class-based activities in college. Tuition and assessment by college or other trained staff helped them develop both the knowledge and understanding related to the job they were doing and the necessary practical competences.

In general, pupils following SVQ programmes found the practical components stimulating. They were supported effectively by their tutors. They found the classroom-based learning activities less enjoyable. However, a few pupils across a range of SVQ programmes did not enjoy all of the practical tasks, which they described as mundane and tedious at times.

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Pupils following National Courses or SPA at colleges or training centres compared generally favourably their learning experiences on these courses with their learning experiences in school. Typically, school pupils reported that they found college courses at Intermediate 1 level less demanding than their school work but that work at Intermediate 2 level was more challenging. A number of pupils welcomed the opportunity which colleges gave them to take more responsibility for their own learning. More than a few pupils on construction and sport and leisure courses felt that the classroom-based element in college or training centre could have been better delivered in school. However, they identified beneficial links between their vocational course and school lessons. Some particularly highlighted links between construction activities in college and craft and design activities in school.

Work experience placements did not involve pupils in formal classes or workshops. Rather, they learned about their chosen vocational area through first-hand experience of the world of work.

3.6 Assessment, progress and outcomes

All pupils following courses of one year's duration or more had an opportunity for summative assessment and for certification of success with a range of awarding bodies which included SQA, City & Guilds, The National Training Organisation for Engineering Manufacture (EMTA) and the British Computer Society (for the European Computer Driving Licence). For other provision, college certificates were available.

The majority of pupils were progressing well on their vocational courses and were achieving the assessable outcomes. They had a clear idea of how they were to be assessed and the criteria for success. However, colleges and other providers had not developed sufficiently effective systems for

reporting progress to pupils, schools, parents and carers. As a result, more than a few pupils were unclear about how much formal progress they were making towards attainment of their award. College and training centre managers had recognised this weakness and some recent improvements had taken place. These improvements had resulted in the production of clearer documentation for stakeholders on the progress of learners, including attainment of learning outcomes. However, a few learners were still unclear about assessment procedures, results and certification. A few pupils did not even know the title of the course they were following. In general, pupils were not well placed to reflect on their learning or progress.

In a few programmes, attainment fluctuated from year to year. In some years, it had been particularly low. High drop-out rates in a few programmes had contributed to poor attainment. For pupils in a few schools participating in a large urban programme, attainment on construction courses had been particularly low. A major contributing factor had been poor selection and recruitment arrangements for pupils on these courses. While the typical Standard Grade profile of pupils on the programme was at Foundation or General level, the construction course contained mandatory units in S4 at Intermediate 2 level, the equivalent of Standard Grade Credit. The training provider and schools had recognised this weakness and were putting in place more appropriate arrangements for the selection of pupils.

A small number of schools reported that, as a result of pupils' engagement with colleges and other providers, the number of exclusions from school had decreased sharply. In one school, in the first full year of implementation of the S3 and S4 vocational programme, S3 exclusions fell by 50% and S4 exclusions fell by 43%. In other schools, managers had not identified any link between college attendance and reduced exclusions.

Pupils following SVQ programmes benefited from regular contact with their tutor who visited them in their work placement. The tutor's role included helping the candidates to develop their portfolio of evidence, with great stress on linking evidence to elements and performance criteria in the SVQ standards. In this way, SVQ candidates had a clear idea of their progress in overtaking the qualification. This stood in contrast to the situation for more than a few pupils on non-SVQ programmes.

In general, colleges and other providers registered pupils with the awarding bodies and thus became the presenting centres. This was identified as an issue by schools whose published SQA award data did not include results from those pupils presented for their vocational courses by another centre.

The administration of registrations with awarding bodies was poor in a few cases. Pupils complained of wrongly spelled or inaccurate names, wrong addresses and missing certificates. There was insufficient liaison between schools, on the one hand, and colleges and other providers, on the other, in relation to checking the accuracy of registration data.

Pupils who had followed a vocational course in S3 and S4 often had good opportunities to apply for a place on a Skillseekers programme or as a Modern Apprentice. Some vocational courses offered an interview to successful pupils for a place on a Modern Apprenticeship programme. More than a few pupils who had been following introductory vocational courses in colleges in S3 or S4 returned in the next year to full-time pre-apprenticeship programmes in the college.

However, a substantial number of pupils entered S5 after their one-year or two-year vocational course because they had no opportunity to continue with their vocational studies, other than to leave school

and go to college full-time. Many pupils did not feel ready for this step and their progression in vocational learning had to be deferred.

In almost all schools where pupils followed a one-year or two-year course in a college or other training venue, there were substantial difficulties in reintegrating pupils into school if they gave up their college course after more than a few weeks' attendance. They had missed the opportunity to join a Standard Grade course from the beginning. Schools had to find ad hoc and often unsatisfactory solutions involving placement into existing classes that were running on the half-day set aside for college attendance.

3.7 Quality assurance and improvement

Colleges implemented systematic and effective quality assurance policies and procedures in most of their programmes. Typically, these policies and procedures covered the creation and management of course committees, course review and self-evaluation exercises, production of annual course reports, and quality improvement proposals, actions and monitoring. However, colleges applied their procedures to provision for school pupils in only a few cases.

Only a very few colleges had formed course committees to manage effectively quality assurance and improvement issues for schools programmes. Where these committees existed, they did not include representation from schools, education authorities or pupils. Thus, only a partial evaluation of the quality of provision was possible and the views of important groups of stakeholders were not taken into account in the review of provision. Course committee reports were generally not helpful in identifying quality improvement actions which could be taken forward jointly by schools and colleges.

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Secondary schools used the *How good is our school?* (HGIOS) framework for the self-evaluation of their provision and HM Inspectors evaluated schools with reference to it. Schools did not encompass vocational courses delivered to their pupils in colleges and elsewhere as part of comprehensive self-evaluation using HGIOS. Education authorities did not work effectively with schools to evaluate wider partnership provision. One college was exploring the appropriateness of using HGIOS to evaluate its college-based provision for pupils.

Other training providers and local council departments had their own policies and procedures for the quality assurance of vocational courses which they delivered. These organisations did not produce separate evaluations of those aspects of their provision relating to school pupils.

A number of informal monitoring arrangements were in place but they were not comprehensive. Colleges reviewed performance indicator data on attainment of individual SQA units. Schools and other providers monitored and reported on pupil attendance, and meetings took place between partners. However, these meetings did not form part of a systematic and comprehensive quality assurance and improvement cycle.

None of the partners involved in the delivery of vocational courses to school pupils had yet produced a comprehensive evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching on these courses. Schools discussed pupils' learning experiences with them informally, sometimes in PSE classes, and pupils filled in questionnaires at college and training venues, as well as in school. Although discussions took place between schools liaison officers from colleges and education authority officers, these discussions did not form part of or promote the evaluation of learning and teaching activities.

College course leaders and lecturers did not communicate effectively, or meet regularly enough, with their corresponding principal teachers and teachers in schools to discuss issues relating to the quality of learning and teaching. In one large urban programme, staff from the local council's building services department acted as links between school and vocational lecturers and tutors and a large number of college and school staff had no contact with each other for the discussion of operational issues affecting learning and teaching. In many cases, there was no contact at all between college and school.

College lecturers and other tutors generally lacked the insight of schoolteachers into the broad range of teaching approaches appropriate to the management of learning activities for young people, some of whom were quite immature in their approach to learning. Similarly, schoolteachers missed opportunities to understand the nature of the college-based learning experiences of their pupils and the factors in them that contributed to successful learning and improved self-confidence in pupils. These difficulties detracted from planning to improve provision.

Strengths

- Most vocational courses led to certification by SQA or other awarding bodies. This provided an effective alternative or addition to a Standard Grade programme for S4 pupils and a useful addition to the portfolio of qualifications of S5 and S6 pupils.
- An increasing number of schools considered carefully the extent to which pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties would benefit from a vocational course before recommending such courses to them.

- In a number of colleges, there was effective provision for pupils with additional support needs and schools made appropriate arrangements to support pupils with such needs by allocating support staff to attend college with the pupils.
- School and college managers generally worked well together to ensure that attendance patterns at colleges and other training venues generally fitted well with timetables of Standard Grade courses in schools. Common timetabling patterns within some education authorities contributed effectively to the aggregation of small numbers of pupils from individual schools into viable college cohorts.
- SVQ tutors and assessors supported pupils well in the workplace.
- Pupils generally found the practical components of their courses to be stimulating.
- Almost all pupils appreciated the informal atmosphere of a college.
- All pupils enjoyed the access that they had in colleges to modern high-specification equipment and resources.
- Pupils' engagement with college had improved their understanding of further education options after they left school.
- A few courses provided good opportunities to progress to Skillseeker or Modern Apprenticeship programmes.
- Participation by pupils in vocational education was linked to sharp reductions in exclusions from a small number of schools.

Main areas for improvement

- Few schools had adopted a sound and clearly-expressed rationale based on educational gain for pupils through offering vocational courses in pupils' S3 course choices.
- The profile of pupils undertaking vocational education was skewed towards the lower end of the attainment range and there was insufficient encouragement to more able pupils to select vocational education where appropriate.
- A few colleges were unable to provide staff to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. In these cases pupils with such difficulties were effectively denied access to vocational courses.
- The mismatch between the start of the school teaching cycle in June and that of colleges in August led to difficulties in starting college-based vocational courses in June.
- It was rare for school teachers to accompany their pupils to the college or training venue. Others missed opportunities to engage with college and other provider staff to discuss issues related to the pupils' learning experiences.
- The proportion of class time in colleges allocated to the development of theory was in excess of pupils' expectations and pupils were consequently less well motivated in these classes.
- In a few classes, pupils felt that the lecturer did not manage the teaching and learning activities in a three-hour class in a way that took good account of their ability to work and concentrate effectively for such a period of time.
- Presenting centres had not developed comprehensive systems for reporting progress to pupils, schools, parents and carers.

3

PROVISION

- Poor selection and recruitment arrangements on a few programmes had led to pupils undertaking study at an inappropriately high level, and low rates of attainment.
- In more than a few cases, there were substantial difficulties in reintegrating pupils into school if they gave up their college course after more than a few weeks.
- Only a few colleges applied their quality assurance policies and procedures effectively to courses for school pupils.
- Schools did not encompass vocational courses delivered to their pupils in colleges and elsewhere as part of comprehensive self-evaluation using HGIOS.
- Other training providers did not produce comprehensive self-evaluations of the courses they delivered to school pupils.
- None of the partnerships involved in the delivery of vocational courses for school pupils had produced comprehensive evaluations of the quality of learning and teaching.
- In a large number of education authorities, there was no central coordination of travel and other arrangements to facilitate collaboration between schools and training providers.

4

4. THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO TRANSITIONS TO WORK

4.1 Destinations of pupils who had undertaken vocational education

Most of the evidence presented by schools in this area was anecdotal. Very few schools had collected data which separated the destination of pupils who had undertaken vocational education from the destination of pupils who had not undertaken such education.

A number of schools reported that pupils on vocational courses had a guarantee of an interview for a place on a Skillseekers or Modern Apprenticeship programme. Other schools reported that the colleges teaching their pupils offered guaranteed full-time places on courses in the following year to successful pupils.

A number of schools confirmed that a majority of S5 winter leavers who had followed a college course prior to December continued their studies full-time at college. A school which operated a *Vocational Pathways* programme reported that almost all pupils continued their studies at college. Another school reported that 44% of pupils participating in vocational education had returned to college for further study. There was a strong link between the subjects chosen within their vocational courses and those studied full-time in college.

Illustration – one school's tracking

One urban school had tracked the destinations of its pupils involved in vocational courses over 2001-2003 and over 2002-2004. Over 2001-2003, 24 pupils had participated. Of 14 hospitality pupils, 11 had completed. Four were in employment or further training broadly related to their vocational course, three were still at school, four were in other employment, one was unemployed and two could not be traced. Of the 10 construction pupils, six had completed. None was in employment or training related to his or her vocational course, four were still at school or college, five were in other employment, and one was unemployed. Fifteen pupils participated over 2002-2004. Of the two administration pupils, one had completed. Both were now in S5. The one pupil on the care, health and fitness course had not completed and was now studying administration in college. The one sport and leisure pupil had completed and was now in S5. None of the three hospitality pupils had completed. One was in college studying sound engineering, one was still at school and one was in unrelated employment. Of the eight construction pupils, only one had completed and was now in S5. Four were in related employment or further training, one was in unrelated further education, and two were unemployed.

One college estimated that about a quarter of the pupils following its construction course for school pupils progressed into the industry as apprentices.

4

THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO TRANSITIONS TO WORK

4.2 Getting ready for work

Almost all pupils reported that, as a result of following a vocational course or a work experience placement, they had a clearer idea of the qualities and attributes required of individuals if they are to contribute effectively to the economic life of Scotland. They recognised these qualities and attributes as including:

- an interest in their chosen vocational area;
- self-discipline to tackle those tasks essential to their vocation but which they did not always like;
- good timekeeping;
- an ability to work in a team;
- effective skills in communication and numeracy; and
- high levels of self-esteem.

Strengths

- In a number of courses, there were clear links to further study or work opportunities.
- A majority of school winter leavers in a number of colleges continued their studies full-time after December.
- Pupils who had followed vocational courses had a clearer idea of skills for employability.

Main area for improvement

- Very few schools gathered evidence related to the destinations of pupils who had undertaken vocational courses and it was therefore difficult to evaluate the contribution of vocational education to successful transitions to work.

5

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Many vocational courses have been delivered to school pupils in the last few years, particularly by further education colleges working in partnership with schools. A number of recent Scottish Executive initiatives, referred to earlier in this report, have resulted in a renewed focus on provision of vocational education for school pupils. The following recommendations are consistent with the directions set in these initiatives. They aim to build upon the strengths of existing good practice and address the main areas for improvement identified in this report.

1. All education authorities should develop further their strategic leadership of vocational education for school pupils, including authority-wide planning and collaboration with partners, based on a sound rationale of educational gain for all pupils.
2. School managers should ensure that the inclusion of vocational courses within the school curriculum has a rationale which is based on the potential for educational gain for all pupils through their study of vocational courses. This rationale should influence such aspects as option column placements and timetabling, and ensure a broadly balanced curriculum for all pupils.
3. Schools, colleges and other providers should communicate effectively with pupils to provide information on vocational course options and the kinds of learning and teaching experiences which pupils will have in college, and make sure that pupils benefit from appropriate induction to their vocational course. Such induction should include information on support arrangements for pupils in college.
4. Schools should draw upon effective liaison with colleges and other providers to provide information regularly to parents and carers on the progress of their children on their vocational course.
5. All partners in vocational courses, including education authorities, schools, colleges and other providers, should communicate effectively with each other to enable well-planned recruitment, delivery, pupil support, assessment and quality assurance arrangements for these courses.
6. Schools should develop vocational education progression opportunities in S5 and S6 for pupils who have completed a vocational course in S4.
7. College and school teaching staff should take account of sector-leading good practice in designing learning and teaching activities for S3 and S4 pupils. In particular, they should have regard to achieving an appropriate balance between theory and practical work, and consider carefully the attention span of pupils when planning classroom and workshop activities.
8. College and school teaching staff should work closely together to ensure that college staff understand the school environment from which pupils come, and that school staff are aware of the ethos and values that pupils will encounter in college. In addition school staff should inform themselves more fully of the range and structure of qualifications available in colleges with a view to informing pupils more effectively of vocational education opportunities when they leave school.

5

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. College and school teaching staff should cooperate more closely in identifying and developing opportunities for collaborative delivery of vocational courses. These opportunities could include shared teaching duties, development of links between school and college courses, and arrangements for lecturers and teachers to reflect with pupils on the nature of their vocational education experience.
10. College curriculum managers should ensure that teaching staff on vocational courses are well prepared for their classes and that pupils' learning experiences are supported effectively by provision of appropriate accommodation, equipment and resources.
11. Partners in the provision of vocational courses should implement effective models of quality assurance which inform the quality improvement and enhancement plans for these courses. Such models should ensure appropriate contributions to monitoring, review, action planning and implementation by all partners and have particular regard to the evaluation of learning and teaching.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

This appendix provides two examples of good practice in specific aspects of provision. Many other examples have been published by the Scottish Executive in the *Lifelong Partners* guide to partnerships. HMIE will continue to identify examples of good practice in vocational education as part of its inspection and review activity, and will disseminate them in suitable ways, for example, through its website.

Planning

Dundee City Council pre-apprentice programme: interview and selection procedures

The council runs four pre-apprentice programmes in building craft, care, cookery and motor vehicle engineering. The partnership to deliver this programme is managed through the council's educational development service and includes Dundee College, local secondary schools, local employers and other council departments. Two of the programmes, building craft and motor vehicle engineering, run over two years (S3 and S4) while the other two programmes, care and cookery, are available only to S4 pupils. These programmes are taken by pupils as an addition to their full Standard Grade curriculum.

In the building craft and motor vehicle engineering programmes, careful account is taken by partners of the number of apprentices that local employers estimate will be needed at the end of the pupils' programme. In this way, expectations of demand for apprentices can be matched to the number of pupils accepted on to programmes. There are

invariably more applicants than places available.

At the initial stage of the selection process, schools receive information from the council which they make available to pupils. The first selection process is undertaken by school guidance and pastoral care teachers, who select pupils for interview on the basis of interest and ability to benefit from the programme.

Pupils attend interview in May for programmes beginning in August. The interviewing panel consists of the council's enterprise in education co-ordinator, a guidance teacher from a school other than that attended by the interviewed pupils, a representative of local employers and the relevant team leader from Dundee College. Pupils are interviewed in groups of up to six and the panel members ask a wide range of questions. At the end of the group interview, the panel members discuss the performance of the applicants and identify those to whom they will offer places. Criteria for selection include: level of interest in the programme; prior experience in the trade or craft; family connections in the vocational area; achievement and attainment in school; and the pupils' perception of employability skills.

Many pupils are well prepared for interview, others less so. For almost all of them, this selection process is their first experience of the competitive nature of the world of work. The rigour of the selection process contributes effectively to the success of pupils on their programme.

APPENDIX 1 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Information for pupils

Edinburgh's Telford College: school guidance manual

The college had put together a well-presented and informative manual for school pupils attending or thinking of attending a programme of vocational education at the college. The manual gave helpful information to pupils in S3–S6 as well as early and winter leavers and covered such topics as: the range and nature of programmes; support for school pupils; the schools link programme; and open learning. It also allowed pupils to look beyond their school career by including sections on Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeship programmes. Other sections described the college's course shadowing service, its portfolio preparation classes for art students and practical skills demonstrations.

APPENDIX 2 ORGANISATIONS VISITED AND CONSULTED

HMIE is grateful to staff in the following organisations for their cooperation in the preparation of this report.

Secondary schools

Auchenharvie Academy
Cumbernauld High School
Fraserburgh Academy
Hillhead High School
Holyrood Secondary School
Invergordon Academy
Irvine Royal Academy
Peebles High School
Peterhead Academy
St Maurice's High School
Shawlands Academy
Tain Royal Academy
Turriff Academy
Whitehill Secondary School
Wick High School

Colleges

Borders College
Cumbernauld College
Edinburgh's Telford College
James Watt College of Further and Higher Education
Moray College
Motherwell College
The North Highland College

Education authorities

Aberdeenshire Council
Dundee City Council
Glasgow City Council
North Ayrshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Scottish Borders Council

APPENDIX 3 SOURCES OF SUPPORT

How good is our school? HM Inspectorate of Education, 2002

http://www.hmie.gov.uk/about_us/inspection/hgios/HGIOS.pdf

Quality Framework for Scottish FE Colleges, SFEFC/HMIE, 2004

http://www.hmie.gov.uk/about_us/inspection/documents/sfetc_framework.doc

Moving On: From School to College, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2000

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publications/more.htm>

Circular 3/2001: Guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum, Scottish Executive, 2001

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/circ3-00.asp>

Determined to Succeed, A review of Enterprise in Education, Scottish Executive, 2002

<http://www.determinedtosucceed.co.uk>

A Curriculum for Excellence, Scottish Executive, 2004

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/cerv-00.asp>

Life Through Learning Through Life – The Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland, Scottish Executive, 2003

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/lifelong/lism-00.asp>

Partnership for a Better Scotland, Scottish Executive, 2003

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/government/pfbs-00.asp>

Lifelong Partners – A Strategy for Partnership, Scottish Executive, 2005

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/36328/0011883.pdf>

Lifelong Partners – A Guide for Schools, Colleges and Local Authorities, Scottish Executive, 2005

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/36328/0011881.pdf>

How good is our school – School-college Partnership. HM Inspectorate of Education, 2005

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosscp.doc>

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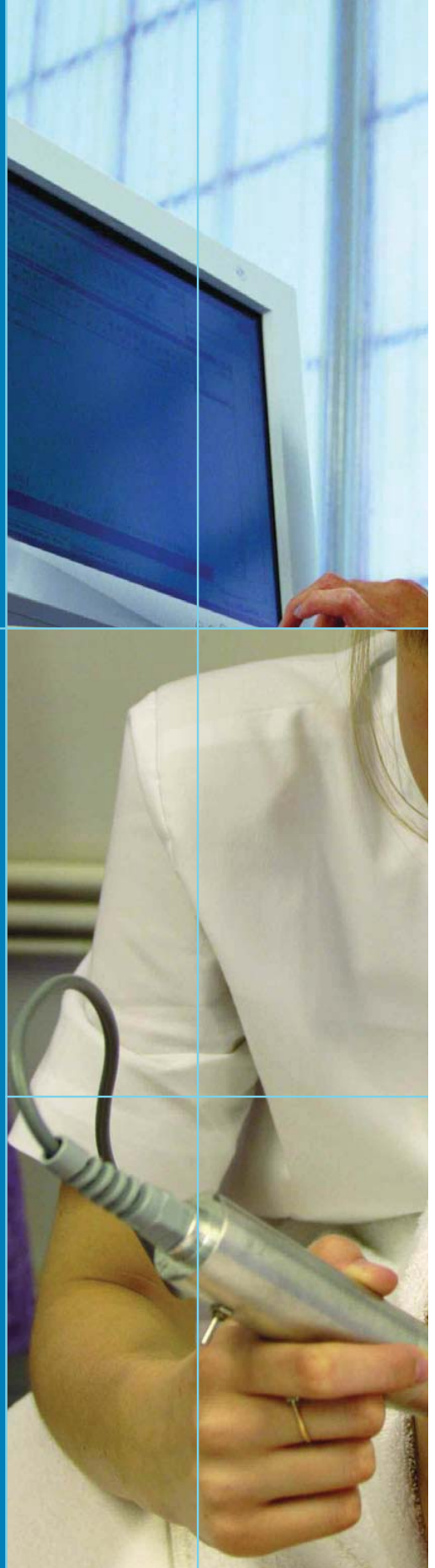
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