**Curriculum Pathways Evening**

**Tuesday 21 November 2023**

1. Introduction

Good evening.

In what follows, I am going to outline for you the types of courses and experiences available to young people in Dalkeith High School’s senior phase.

Now clearly, the Scottish education system has changed dramatically over the years but if we were to identify the biggest change, it is probably in the gradual move from a system that catered for the few to a system where at least the aim is to provide qualifications and experiences suitable for all. Society and economics has demanded that. The job market shrunk for S4 school leavers so leaving school with nothing much more than an O Grade Arithmetic was no longer preparing young people for life to come.

I will talk to you, then, about more than national qualifications, that’s the Nat 4, Nat 5 and Higher courses, and instead about a range of experiences and qualifications that are now available to young people.

1. DHS Curriculum Model and Rationale

The last major change in the curriculum model for our school took place in session 2016-17. At this point, we decided pupils in S4 to S6 would be coursed and timetabled as a coherent single unit. Within this framework, due to the better use of teacher resources, the school would have the capacity to provide more vocational options. Moreover, the new structure would facilitate effective partnership working because all options would be timetabled – no longer would young people have to miss classes of other subjects in order to pursue the vocational or personal achievement opportunities often organised in conjunction with external partners.

In February 2018, when we were inspected, our curriculum model was praised and the comments are there for all to see.

It’s hoped that what Midlothian is trying to do now with the developments Mrs Ormerod has outlined will bolster an already strong Dalkeith curriculum offer.

The aims of our curriculum are that it should do all of these things. Particularly important to us is the parity of esteem created by ensuring all options are certificated and all options are timetabled:

* reflect local and national priorities
* reflect the school’s vision and values
* ensure parity of esteem across the range of different pathways by providing accreditation for all options
* ensure parity of esteem by timetabling all options
* allow for progression for all young people
* maximise attainment and achievement for each young person
* create space for personal achievement opportunities
* provide for each young person a flexible pathway to qualifications and skills development and, ultimately, to a sustained positive destination
* allow stage and not age to be the determining factor in course choice

1. What do we mean by the senior phase?

There will be varying levels of experience in this room in terms of high school curriculum so what do we mean by ‘senior phase’ as opposed to ‘broad general education’?

* S1 to S3 provides young people with a ‘broad general education’. When you move into S4, and then into S5 and S6, you choose what you like and what you are good at and you learn much more about subjects and what you learn takes you much deeper into the ideas, the concepts, the theories.
* If you work hard, you will leave with the qualifications that will take you on to the next stage, whatever that may be.
* And also, as you gain your qualifications, you develop the skills that you need whether you decide to continue with learning or go into work. And skills such as problem solving, independence and resilience are ones that will help you through whatever life might throw at you.

1. SCQF levels?

* In order to be able to compare the different types of qualifications now on offer in Scotland, there is something called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The SCQF will help you judge the difficulty and the amount of work involved in the different courses on offer.
* National 3 is level 3; National 4 is level 4, right up to Advanced Higher, level 7. These are the National Qualifications with which you are probably most familiar – no exam for Nat 3 and 4; exam for all the other levels. However, all the other types of courses are classified in terms of levels as well, so a level 6 NPA should have the same difficulty and amount of work associated with it as a Higher course.
* Look on the SCQF website for more information.

1. Course Choice

In a minute, I will talk a wee bit about the alternatives to National Qualifications. But first let’s outline how course choice will look in the senior phase, starting with S3.

* In S3, pupils study English, maths, a modern language, PE and RME, plus 5 further subjects – that’s 11 subjects
* In S4, pupils narrow to 7 courses
* S4 pupils will continue to study maths and English and, in addition, will select five other subjects.    Each subject will be allocated 4 periods per week. S4 students will also have core lessons such as PSE and PE
* S5 and S6 students will select between 5-7 subjects along with wider achievement awards.  The total number of subjects is dependent on the level of the courses selected.  Wider achievement awards will allow opportunities, for example, to volunteer, to carry out leadership activities or to undertake elements of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. S5 and S6 students will also have core subjects such as PSE and Health and Wellbeing.
* All level 6/7 courses will be allocated 6 periods per week (though some periods of Advanced Higher will be self-study), and all level 4/5 courses will be allocated 4 periods per week. Young people are encouraged to study English and literacy, and mathematics and numeracy, until their potential has been reached.

Some level 6 and Advanced Higher courses may be taught in conjunction with other schools in the Authority so travelling or online learning may be involved.

* For now, the plan is that senior phase students will have a free choice of subjects. They will not be choosing from a subjects-in-columns grid. However, all students will be asked for a reserve subjects in case first choices cannot be accommodated. Young people must be fully prepared to study the reserve choices they provide.

1. New subjects

* Since there will be some preparation for national qualifications in S3, it is recommended that young people choose S4 subjects from the 11 studied in S3
* However, there are a host of new subjects and opportunities introduced in the senior phase that young people might also consider and here they are
* And there are other ways to learn outside the classroom – through subjects run by teachers in the school such as beekeeping, volunteering and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, or through taking on a college course or a Foundation Apprenticeship
* And in S6 there is the opportunity for Open University study

1. College

* Schools college partnership courses are provided by Edinburgh College and run at their various campuses. We access courses at Midlothian, Sighthill and Milton Road campuses. The time taken to get to Granton campus means that courses running there cannot be chosen by Dalkeith pupils.
* On-campus college courses run on a Tuesday and a Thursday afternoon. There are a few courses which run on a Friday afternoon. It is also hoped that the new Midlothian consortium arrangements will mean that bespoke arrangements can be made with the college to provide in-demand courses at locations convenient for our six secondary schools
* A few courses are virtual and the times you study these courses can sometimes be more flexible
* You have to be committed to take on one of the college courses. You won’t be home until around 4. 30 or after. And lunch can be a bit of a rush. And the virtual courses, where you don’t travel to a college campus, require self-discipline and good organisation skills. But it’s worth it if you want to do one of the interesting courses on offer.
* For more information on the courses available this session, see the college website. The college provision for the next session is usually available for viewing late January. Also, the college has a stand in the area just outside and the college representative is there specifically to discuss schools college partnership courses. If it is post-school college courses about which you require information, see the stand in the assembly hall.

1. Foundation Apprenticeships 1

Next, Foundation Apprenticeships.

* Foundation Apprenticeships are a work-based learning opportunity for senior-phase secondary school pupils. Lasting one or two years, pupils begin their Foundation Apprenticeship in S5 or S6.
* The qualification is designated level 6, so the same level of difficulty as Highers. But the experience of undertaking an FA is quite different from studying, say, Higher English.
* FAs focus on particular areas of the job market
* Some of the time you spend with what is called a learning provider – that is where you get the theory connected to the employment area. A learning provider in Midlothian could be Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability, a school, or it could be Edinburgh College.
* The other type of input in the course comes from industry – you’ll work in companies or workplaces connected to the subject of your FA and you’ll work with your experienced colleagues on real projects. We’ve had pupils working in local nurseries and care homes in Midlothian, as well as at Microsoft in Edinburgh.

1. Foundation Apprenticeships 2

So what do you get out of doing an FA?

* Well, from the quality work experience and teaching you learn the essential skills in specialised areas that employers want. And even if you decide you don’t want to go into the area in which you did your FA, the skills you learn and the experience you gain will strengthen your CV or your personal statement for college or university.
* If you successfully complete your FA and you want go on to a Modern Apprenticeship immediately on leaving school, your FA will support your application and you will actually have already completed some of the learning required for the Modern Apprenticeship so you will be ahead of the game.
* If college or university is your thing, the FA qualification is recognised by all colleges and universities. But a word of warning. Always check the university or college website for the specific entry requirements for any course in which you might be interested. Or give them a phone. It could be the case that a university counts an FA as an entry qualification but only if you are applying to study a course in the same area.

1. Foundation Apprenticeships 3

Midlothian Council FAs

* Over recent years, Midlothian Council has offered four FAs: in Business Skills, Social Services Children and Young People, and Social Services and Healthcare, and IT: Software Development. All were 1-year courses, apart from IT which required 2 years and had to be started in S5. Information will be available after Christmas about the FAs on offer for next session. And there are more FAs available through Edinburgh College.
* We will keep you updated on what is on offer and keep looking at the Midlothian Council and Edinburgh College websites for further details.
* FAs have proved to be a very successful choice for Dalkeith High School pupils over the last few years. Intending applicants must note, however, that similar to the college courses it will be a long day with young people not arriving home until late afternoon. Personal commitments such as jobs need to be factored into the decision to apply.
* Midlothian FAs are run by Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability and there is be someone to chat to at a stand here in our curriculum pathways evening area.

1. Skills for Work courses

* One of the other types of course open to you in our senior phase is Skills for Work courses.
* These practical courses, which don’t have an exam, all encourage you to practise the sort of skills needed no matter the particular job you do, for example working as a team; using initiative and so on.
* You can practise these skills by choosing courses that focus on quite different areas of employment.
* And you can see here the ones we’re offering in school.

1. National Progression Award courses

* Another type of course you can do is one that leads to what is called a National Progression Award.
* Again, it’s skills sought after by employers that you’ll get but this time what you achieve is linked to a workplace standard so that if you put these qualifications down on an application form, an employer will know exactly the sort of skills you have – and the level of those skills.
* NPAs are available at levels 2 to 6
* And look here at what you can do in school

1. Awards

* These courses help you develop personal skills you will need when you leave school

- skills that will motivate you to be successful, and to participate positively in the communities in which you live

* And here’s the opportunities the school offers

1. YASS

Finally, a word about Open University courses for a particular group of young people in S6 …

* These courses – called YASS courses (Young Applicants in Schools Scheme) give S6 students in Scotland the unique opportunity to study a range of university level courses in school alongside their other studies.
* A YASS course is designed to bridge the gap between school and university, college or employment, helping motivated students stand out from the crowd. It encourages independent learning and builds confidence. Taking part in YASS develops key skills such as time management and using an online study environment.
* Registration for YASS modules is organised through the school, although students deal directly with The OU when it comes to their course work and assessment.
* These courses are perfect for young people who have already achieved 4 or 5 A or B Higher qualifications, and who are ready to take that step towards university study. Or they are for those with the necessary qualifications who simply wish to explore a particular area of interest in more depth.
* More information about YASS and the courses offered is available on their website

1. Coursing Process

* S2 happening before Christmas, and S3, 4 and 5 in January and February – further information about the mechanics will be given nearer to the time

1. Advice and Support

There is plenty of support out there to help.

* Take on board what teachers say in reports and at parents’ evenings and look at the progression routes they recommend
* When the time comes, work through all the materials on the website. Don’t just look at course names on the option form – take time to explore the course descriptions in the option booklet.
* Pupils can speak to our careers adviser, Barbara Moir, who you will find in the hall tonight
* And, of course, pupils should always approach their pupil support leader whenever they require guidance. PSLs will be focussing in PSE on all matters course choice so it should be easy to ask questions.
* And, finally, take advantage of tonight. Every department has a flyer at their station outlining course pathways within school and giving inspiration as to where such pathways can lead. And every department is represented by at least one teacher so take the time to talk to the experts about what they offer. Our hope is that the curriculum pathways evening will complement the careers fair – be inspired by what you see in the hall and then find out how to get there. Or the other way round.

1. Conclusion

* That brings me to the end of the presentation. We are on a tight schedule tonight so we are not taking questions but please scan the QR code to leave feedback and ask questions. We will prepare an FAQ and post it on the website along with the slides from tonight’s presentations.

Thank you for coming; enjoy your evening.