

So – if there's more than one Christian staff member in the school and you don't have a regular prayer meeting, get going right away! If you already meet and pray, be encouraged: it's the most important single thing you can do to support all your colleagues and your pupils. If there's only one of you, get your House Group/Bible Study Group praying for the school.

And don't forget to pray for the 'heedie' too. Why not ask him or her if he/she would like you to pray for particular aspects of the CfE roll-out? Curriculum for Excellence has such potential: it's enormous, it's heralding a reshaping of your school that will last till 2016 at the earliest, and like all change it's a bit scary. Who knows, your Head Teacher might be grateful for all the help he/she can get!

Richard Coton
Rector, Monifieth High School (September 2011)

The Curriculum for Excellence

Education Representatives Handbook

A guide to good practice for
Church of Scotland education
representatives on local authority
education committees

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The Curriculum for Excellence

Opportunity knocks

Richard Coton, Rector of Monifieth High School, sees Curriculum for Excellence as the greatest opportunity in 30 years.

The story behind the Values of Curriculum for Excellence is interesting – and significant. Whereas every other part of the architecture of this vast scheme has been endlessly drafted and redrafted, the Values arose out of a single conversation among the original core planning team. They'd been hard at work for many days and weeks when someone pointed out that CfE had not yet been based on a coherent set of values. Very quickly, someone else in the group suggested the four Values on the Scottish Mace: Wisdom, Justice, Compassion and Integrity. The idea commanded instant support. There was no further debate.

An unambiguous statement of moral absolutes, at the core of Scotland's radical new approach to education. In a relativistic culture, how remarkable is that? And such superb values too – recognisably Biblical. You have to ask whose Hand is behind that remarkable turn of events.

And make no mistake about it, the moral lead within the new Curriculum is a central factor: Do you remember the 'Lifeskills' approach to Social Education in the 1980s? 'Education must be morally neutral. We'll help you develop tools for life, but how you use them is entirely up to you! Young Adolf could easily have got top grades: after all, he was extremely skilful! OK, I'm pushing it, and I'm certainly not saying that the average conscientious teacher took things so far along the relativistic road. But the new world of CfE is refreshingly different. Cross-cutting themes like Citizenship and Sustainability actively encourage all pupils to care for each other and their environment. Of the 4 Capacities, Responsible Citizens takes exactly the same lead, while Effective Contributors implies a need to serve others which is in complete harmony with Christianity.

What have we learned as we implement Curriculum for Excellence? Well, firstly, the bedrock of CfE is not the Experiences and Outcomes. It's about two things: Doing School Together and Making Sense of Learning.

In fact, like many schools, we've actually been doing much of CfE for a decade.

Doing School Together means giving pupils loads of responsibility, both in the classroom and in helping run the school. That, by the way, can be a great opportunity for Christian pupils to have an influence. It also means working in partnership with the community – which gives superb opportunities for local churches and Christian organisations to work in partnership with the school and serve it. If you haven't done so already, send today for a copy of CARE's DVD 'Keeping Faith in Schools: How Churches are Making a Difference'. It really opens up exciting possibilities.

Making Sense of Learning includes Interdisciplinary Projects (which we've found our pupils respond to most positively). Real-life contexts have always been pursued by teachers, but the new Experiences and Outcomes really point you in this direction. Have a look at the CARE website for a series of School Case Studies which give a whole range of practical ideas. The case studies are linked to the Draft Outcomes and haven't been updated yet, but they all work just as well with the final Experiences and Outcomes, and they help you legitimately introduce your faith into a wide range of contexts, both primary and secondary. You'll find them at www.care.org.uk (*Care for Scotland* > *Information and Resources* > *School Case Studies*.)

As schools look at more dynamic ways of delivering the curriculum, there are excellent opportunities for Chaplains to introduce them to faith-based resources like:

- Scripture Union's Outdoor Centres (Lendrick Muir and Alltnacriche) which deliver "Classrooms Outdoors" experiences for Curriculum for Excellence (www.suscotland.org.uk)
- Youth for Christ's superb curricular materials, all customised for Curriculum for Excellence. See especially their *exploRE* resources (www.exploreforschools.co.uk)
- Opportunity Knocks
- Romance Academy a national sex and relationships

initiative run by youth workers in schools and elsewhere. The programmes are based on Christian values, and if your church's youth worker hasn't been trained yet, (s)he should definitely check it out at <http://romanceacademy.org>

These resources are not necessarily overly expensive, so if a church offers to subsidise them as part of its ongoing partnership with the school, there can be massive benefits in terms of goodwill and positive response. Paying for part of *exploRE* for a Romance Academy, or for places for some extra pupils who could not otherwise afford a residential experience can be warmly appreciated.

The biggest shift brought about by Curriculum for Excellence, however, is a broadening of our view of what education is all about. The emphasis on Health and Wellbeing, the Four Capacities, the underlying messages about how pupils, staff, parents and the wider community relate to each other – all these lead to a holistic view of education which is much closer to the Bible than Scotland's (and Britain's) traditional tendency to over-emphasise the mind. It's no co-incidence that one of the key hothouses of the Enlightenment was in Scotland. We may feel comfortable in the familiar cultural legacy that it has given us, but like all heresies the Enlightenment was always a subtly dangerous distortion and over-emphasis of God's truth.

So are schools finding CfE easy to implement? And will it be easier in a year's time. To be honest, the answer to both questions is probably 'No'. CfE is a fundamental re-thinking of what school is all about. The underlying architecture, the thinking, the rationale, is coherent – don't let the Doubting Thomases tell you differently. But with something as big as this, it's probably inevitable that communication and roll-out have not been as smooth as we'd have liked.

You may not be able to control the national picture, but you certainly can be salt and light in your school, whether as a teacher or a chaplain change is always stressful but it also brings immense opportunities.