



# CO-CREATING THE LEARNER JOURNEY

## SCHOOL-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS AND EFFECTIVE SKILLS PATHWAYS

A report for the Curriculum and Assessment Board

September 2021

Foreword by **Jamie Hepburn MSP**, Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training

### **Report Authors**

Gordon Hunt, CDN Associate (Research & Enhancement Centre)

Dr Karen Campbell, CDN Research Associate

Colin Lynagh, CDN Research Associate

Grant Ritchie, Associate Director, CDN

### **Report Steering Group**

Dr Ken Thomson OBE, Principal & Chief Executive, Forth Valley College

Lydia Rohmer, Principal & Chief Executive, West Highland College UHI

Diane Greenlees, Director of Critical Skills and Occupations, SDS

Jim Metcalfe, CEO, College Development Network

Cover image: New College Lanarkshire's work with schools to develop technical skills in robot building through VEX Robotics Competitions was demonstrated at College Expo 2019

# CONTENTS

<b>Ministerial Foreword</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section 1: Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section 2: Background</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Section 3: The Development of School-College Partnerships</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Section 4: School-College Partnerships and the Skills and Policy Landscape</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Section 5: The Scale of School-College Partnerships</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Section 6: Review of Key Characteristics and Success Factors of School-College Partnerships</b>	<b>36</b>
1. Partnering with Primary Schools	37
2. Addressing the STEM Agenda	40
3. Developing Digital Skills and Competencies	44
4. Gaining industry insight	48
5. Managing Careers using Big Data and Skills Profiling	51
6. Engaging learners in their skills development and profiling	54
7. Work-based learning in focus	57
8. Promoting Post-School Pathways	59
9. Pathways to apprenticeships	62
10. Developing the Young Workforce through Foundation Apprenticeships	65
11. Scaling apprenticeship opportunities for transitions	68
<b>Section 7: The Characteristics of Successful School-College Partnerships</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Section 8: Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	<b>77</b>
The Recommendations	81
<b>Section 9: References</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Section 10: Acknowledgements</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>86</b>

# MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



**This is an exciting time for the college and school sectors with the recent publication of the OECD Review *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* and the SFC's *Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research*. These reports sit well with the underpinning principles of *Developing the Young Workforce* and indeed reaffirm the commitment and value of the work already progressed.**

This makes the timing of the School-College Partnership Report, *Co-Creating the Learner Journey*, particularly relevant, as we think about curriculum reform and funding in a coherent way. Effective School-College Partnerships will remain a critically important part of the Scottish curriculum.

In 2018/19, who would have thought that School-College Partnerships made up, on average, 22% of all activity in Scotland's colleges with over 72,000 enrolments, up by 38,000 in the years from 2013/14. In addition, Scotland saw impressive growth in Foundation Apprenticeships, to over 4200 in 2020/21, up from 3892 the previous year. Despite the impact of the pandemic, with strong leadership, partnerships and a collective vision for the future, there is real scope for a bounce back.



**I welcome recognition of the important part schools and colleges can play in our economic recovery, with industry as key partners in identifying and co-creating the training and qualifications needed for the skills of the future.**

School-College Partnerships are recognised as a key component in a young person's learner journey, supporting Scotland's economic recovery by providing our young people with the skills industry needs for a dynamic, green, healthy and fair workforce.

The report highlights the whole system approach needed from Scottish Government, industry, local authorities, schools, colleges, young people, parents and carers to recognise the value of School-College Partnerships in providing access to opportunity through a balance of professional and technical work-based learning, particularly with the introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships as part of the national qualifications framework.

As the Scottish Government prioritises the need for fair work, I welcome recognition of the important part schools and colleges can play in our economic recovery, with industry as key partners in identifying and co-creating the training and qualifications needed for the skills of the future.

School-College Partnerships are key in this regard, by giving young people the opportunity for sector and industry insight when still at school, helping them to make better informed choices in their learning journey and driving more talent into growth areas and sectors where there are recognised skills shortages.

Colleges have shown how they can support new growth areas like digital, life sciences, renewables and energy as well as working to address sectors with skill shortages such as health and social care, hospitality and tourism.

School-College Partnerships are well placed to deliver on key Scottish Government policies such as STEM, access and inclusion, fair work and the gender action plan. They play an important role in encouraging young people from a diverse range of

backgrounds and abilities to embark on relevant work-based learning and, through Foundation Apprenticeships and other pathways, directly support the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee.

The case studies in this report are excellent examples of what can be achieved.



**Jamie Hepburn MSP**

**Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## DEFINITION

A School-College Partnership is defined as:

- **Any learning activity that involves young people aged 3-18 that is delivered by a College in collaboration with a School, either in School or in College, with a broad focus on skills for life and work and often with the involvement of employers.**



## SCALE AND GROWTH

In 2018-19, **16% of all secondary school pupils were enrolled in a School-College Partnership**, with a slight dip in 2019-20 to 13% as a result of COVID restrictions.

The 2018-19 figure includes **9.6% of S1-S3 pupils** and **22.3% of Senior Phase pupils**.

With the slight dip in 2019-20, Senior Phase enrolments remained at over 20%, meaning that **a fifth of Senior Phase pupils are involved in a School-College Partnership**.

Between 2016-17 and 2019-20 School-College Partnership **enrolments rose steadily from 53,000 to almost 73,000**.

If the upward trend continues once we have recovered from the current 'COVID dip' in engagement we will rapidly reach the point where 100,000 pupils are involved in School-College Partnerships (including Foundation Apprenticeships). That would represent

around **12% of all school pupils in Scotland engaging in study with a College**.

There has been a **rapid growth in Foundation Apprenticeship participation**, with a ninefold increase from 2016-17 to 2019-20, including the total more than doubling between 2018-19 and 2019-20. This demonstrates the growing importance of Foundation Apprenticeships to the School-College Partnership provision.

While the report provides a range of indicators to show the growth of School-College Partnerships, there is currently **no nationally available data set** that would allow a statistical analysis of the full lifecycle of School-College Partnership activity from enrolment to the ultimate destination of the students or provide granularity across SCQF levels. This report recommends that a project to produce such a report on an annual basis should be developed.



## CHARACTERISTICS

This report identifies **10 key characteristics** of successful School-College Partnerships:

- Learner-Centred, personalised approach.
- Shared vision, values and aims.
- Evidence-based.
- Inclusive.
- Local authority engagement.
- Collaborative and constructive relationships.
- Strong leadership.
- Industry as partners.
- Appreciation of different learning contexts.
- Continually evolving and improving.



## CASE STUDIES

This report shows a picture of long-term growth and development, with colleges having a history of working with schools that has been accelerated in recent years by the advent of **Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy**, and the Curriculum for Excellence.

The **11 case studies** in the report show the range of School-College Partnerships that support young people throughout the learner journey, from partnering with primary schools to promoting post-school pathways. They also show the scale and value of employer engagement in gaining industry insight and supporting key skills areas such as digital and STEM along with the growing numbers of Foundation Apprenticeships.

The case studies demonstrate the role colleges play in a **seamless learner journey** and in the raising of career aspirations and developing meta-skills from the early years and primary (seen in the case studies of work with primary and early years pupils at Edinburgh College and New College Lanarkshire) all the way to supporting Developing the Young Workforce and delivering Foundation Apprenticeships such as those in creative and digital media at Moray College UHI.

This report provides an introduction to School-College Partnership activity in Scotland. The evidence provided here suggests that there is **scope for much deeper study** of School-College Partnerships that will help us to understand how their continued growth can support skills profiling,

career support and a wide range of personalised learner journeys that will develop positive outcomes for our young people to meet the challenges of entering the world of work in uncertain times where their vision, energy and creativity will be essential to securing a sustainable future.

It is also important to note that School-College Partnerships are **inclusive of all ages and stages of the learner journey**, providing qualifications across a range of SCQF levels, and there are long-standing collaborations that **support the success of those pupils with additional support needs and experience of multiple disadvantage**. While these areas of work are identified in the report, conducting more research into this aspect of the value of School-College Partnerships and the variety of learner experiences they provide would be a key part of the further work proposed in the recommendations.

Recommendations have therefore been made around **continued research** into the impact and scale of School-College Partnerships, the development of a **toolkit** to support their future development and more **effective promotion** of them within the education sector and beyond.



## SUPPORTING SECTOR CHANGE

The report shows that **School-College Partnerships intersect with a wide range of key policies and development areas**, and recommends that this should be further explored to ensure that the expertise and knowledge contained within School-College Partnerships and the teams that deliver them is fully supported and utilised in the future planning and delivery of a coherent tertiary system that links seamlessly to the whole learner journey and skills landscape.

The OECD Review *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* identifies the need to 'balance Curriculum for Excellence so students can fully benefit from a coherent learning experience from 3-18 years' (recommendation 1). It also highlights the need to 'adapt the Senior Phase to match the vision of Curriculum for Excellence' (recommendation 1.3). In doing so **the OECD identifies the importance of the need to offer a 'clear structure for the diversity of pathways'** offered to learners.

The present report's description of the key characteristics of School-College Partnerships and the associated case studies show that the **increased choice and opportunities** represented by them are well-aligned to a collaborative process that supports a range of flexible pathways, qualifications and specialisms for students. The over-arching theme of collaboration and co-creation that characterises School-College Partnerships can clearly play a prominent role in the implementation of the OECD recommendations, as can their presence at all stages of the learner journey.

This report also responds to the recommendations of the Scottish Funding Council's *Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research*. The SFC review recognises the importance of **multiple pathways for learners and the key role of joint provision with schools**.

There is a strong focus in the SFC Review on **good support and guidance** to enable students to understand the different pathways, the removal of duplication and improved recognition of prior learning, improving data sharing and performance monitoring across sectors and reviewing funding arrangements to enable increased access and improve learner pathways. These are all areas in which School-College Partnerships can play a key role, and some specific areas have been identified in the recommendations:

- Support for a new National Impact Framework.
- Supporting regional approaches to the learner journey and skills development and alignment.
- Engagement with the proposed Tertiary Provision Pathfinders groups.
- The revision of Outcome Agreements and the enhancement of data, analytics and evidence sharing.

As with the OECD report, there is a clear alignment between the aims of the SFC review and the direction of travel for School-College Partnerships and **the Curriculum and Assessment Board, as the commissioning body for the present report will, it is anticipated, wish to ensure a high profile for the work of School-College Partnerships in the implementation of both reports**.



## THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are designed to build on the learning from this initial review of the range and scale of School-College Partnerships.

This report is intended to be a starting point for increased recognition at national level of the role that colleges and schools working together can play in supporting skills for life and work, the learner journey and regional planning.

For this reason, we have not dwelt on the challenges experienced in the past eighteen months, although it was the discussion of these challenges by the Curriculum and Assessment Board that led to the report being commissioned. It is clear that much has been learned by the necessity of responding to the pandemic and to the need to continue delivering in lockdown, and this learning will inform future development.

The recommendations are forward-looking and propose the key areas in which further work can be undertaken and in which the value and impact of School-College Partnerships and the knowledge and expertise of those who deliver them can be included in future planning and development.

The recently launched CDN Research and Enhancement Centre, of which this report is an early output, will we hope be a key resource in taking this work forward.



### RECOMMENDATION 1

School-College Partnerships to be recognised and identified as a key vehicle for the implementation of the OECD's *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* recommendations on the creation of a coherent learning experience for young people aged 3-18.



### RECOMMENDATION 2

SFC to recognise the importance of the School-College Partnership in future funding as an integral part of the learner journey, particularly in work-based learning and vocational qualifications (for example Foundation Apprenticeships in the Senior Phase) and in the light of the OECD's *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* report and actions. School-College Partnerships give real experience of potential career pathways and career decision-making from an early age through primary and into the broad general education and the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.



### RECOMMENDATION 3

SFC to commission a mapping exercise to identify existing and planned School-College Partnership activity that can be developed or extended to support the implementation of the learner-journey and skills-related recommendations of the SFC's *Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research*.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

Colleges to work with SFC to ensure that key staff involved in developing and delivering School-College Partnerships are included in the implementation of the *SFC's Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research* through the work of the proposed Tertiary Provision Pathfinders, the review of Outcome Agreements, the related data, analytics and evidence-sharing work and the development of the National Impact Framework.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

Establish an annual statistical report on School-College Partnerships to allow meaningful and consistent comparison across school/college provision and mapping to local planning processes including regional skills assessments. The report will interrogate cross-sectoral data sources to provide key performance indicators/measures of success on enrolment, progression, attainment and positive destinations for all students at national and regional levels.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

Using the 10 identified characteristics of successful School-College Partnerships as a starting point, CDN to work with the CLASS network, FACTS and the Vice Principal's Curriculum Group to create an effective planning and evaluation toolkit for the future development of School-College Partnerships. This resource will be linked to the SFC's proposed National Impact Framework to ensure that the value and impact of School-College Partnerships can be demonstrated as part of the revised approach to strategic provision planning and skills alignment.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

CDN to undertake further work with strategic stakeholders from schools, colleges, Scottish Government, SFC, SDS, ADES and other relevant organisations, using the present report as a starting point, to provide a comprehensive evaluation of School-College Partnerships in terms of their impact on progression and positive destinations. This work should include academic research into examples of good SCP practice to increase understanding of the theory and practice of delivering effective partnership programmes.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

Both the school and college sectors should build on the success of the move to online learning during the pandemic to focus on the learning from School-College Partnerships to deliver the Digital Ambition for Scotland's Colleges and the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland, through reviewing current provision, using integrated technology to transform and update programme content, developing common access to digital platforms and joint training on digital pedagogy.

### **RECOMMENDATION 9**

Further consideration should be given to exploring the interdependency between School-College Partnerships and key policy areas such as the STEM strategy, Access and Inclusion, Young Person's Guarantee, Developing the Young Workforce, Gender Action Plan and other Scottish Government strategies. This should be with a view to exploiting the capacity colleges have to act as regional anchors to support key policy targets.

# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

School-College Partnerships make up, on average, around 22% of all activity in Scotland's Colleges. This figure does not include Foundation Apprenticeships, numbers of which have more than doubled over the past two years. The challenges of maintaining this activity during the COVID 19 pandemic have highlighted its importance as a core and independent component of the Senior Phase, as well as the need to maintain and develop the many excellent projects in the Broad General Education (BGE) phase and in primary schools which support learner pathways and subject choice.

In continuing to develop School-College Partnerships, the sector benefits from the excellent networking capacity with employers provided by Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and by the opportunities created by Foundation Apprenticeships, as well as the potential of increases in digital capacity that have been accelerated by the response to the pandemic.

This report responds to the challenges faced by schools, colleges and local authorities in maintaining their activity during a period when school and college buildings were closed, and many young people have struggled to engage with their educational journey. Considering these challenges has highlighted the rapid growth in partnership working between schools, colleges and employers in recent years and prompted a desire for a greater understanding of the range and impact of these activities.

The report looks at the range and characteristics of School-College Partnerships (SCPs) through a number of case studies and by analysis of available data. The recommendations are intended to support the continued development of effective and sustainable School-College Partnerships that will benefit all learners and to identify further work that can be done to embed them within the learner journey.

While the report emphasises the role that School-College Partnerships have to play in skills provision, it is important to note that they have a role to play across the learner journey, including for those pupils with additional support needs and those facing the challenges of multiple disadvantage. Within the report and in the recommendations, we note that further work is required to fully understand this aspect of School-College Partnerships and their contribution to the success of all our young people.

The OECD Report, *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*<sup>1</sup>, was released in June 2021 and highlights the importance of a coherent learning experience from 3-18 years. The need for a diversity of pathways and the ability of learners in the Senior Phase to 'design their own pathway as they see fit'<sup>2</sup> within the vision of the Curriculum for Excellence provides the opportunity for School-College Partnerships to be a central element of co-creating that diversity.

1 [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence\\_bf624417-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence_bf624417-en)

2 Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future, Recommendation 1.3, p.121

Similarly, the Scottish Funding Council's report *Coherence and Sustainability, A Review of Tertiary Education and Research*<sup>3</sup> was published in June 2021 and highlights the importance of coherent tertiary education and skills provision. The timing of the SFC report has provided us with the opportunity to align our findings with its recommendations.

3 <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Review/coherence-and-sustainability.pdf>

The authors would like to thank the members of the School-College Partnership Report Steering Group for their guidance and support in the development of this report, colleagues in School-College Partnerships across Scotland for their time and input, and the teams at the Scottish Government, Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, and Education Scotland for their contributions. In particular we should like to thank the members of the CLASS (College Liaison in association with Scottish Schools) Network for their support and for their innovative and inspirational work in leading the development of School-College Partnerships.



## SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

This report has its origins in discussions with the Curriculum and Assessment Board in the autumn of 2020. The discussion was in the context of the reopening of schools and reported tensions and the potential for quality issues where a young person was attending both school and college as part of a School-College Partnership arrangement. These tensions were not uniform across different regions and the need for a better awareness and understanding as to the breadth of experiences of School-College Partnerships across the country was identified.

An initial short life working group was convened under the aegis of the College Principals' Group (CPG) to engage with colleges, schools and local authorities. This group presented an update report to the Curriculum and Assessment Board in December 2020 which combined qualitative analysis from fifteen local authorities, nine regional colleges and representatives of the School-College Partnership Network (CLASS) with quantitative data to 2018/19 from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS). The original report provided to the Curriculum and Assessment Board, together with its supporting information, is included in the Appendix. The data and considerations from that report form the starting point of the present report.

The report of the short life working group identified the need for further work which would provide a comprehensive picture of School-College Partnerships in Scotland and identify the key characteristics of successful partnerships supported by case studies from across Scotland. This work has been undertaken by the CDN Research and Enhancement Centre.

This analysis of Scottish School-College partnerships provides recommendations for the alignment of their development with key strategic initiatives such as the SFC and OECD reviews. We anticipate that it will be used to support future strategic planning and decision making by Scottish Government, Local Authority Directors of Education, College managers, School managers and practitioners, helping to ensure well-orchestrated regional and local planning, as well as policy and resource allocation to support world class partnerships in learning and skill development.

# SECTION 3: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

## Origins

Colleges and schools have collaborated to a certain extent since colleges have existed. Routine collaborations around recruitment and ‘taster’ events for school pupils were a regular occurrence and a normal part of the calendar of both forms of organisation.

In the 1990s, colleges were encouraged to grow under the banner of ‘lifelong learning’ and different forms of collaboration were developed. Across Scotland, local authorities and their local colleges made a variety of agreements which saw lecturers from colleges delivering classes in schools, and school pupils attending college, on a limited basis. These agreements were distinctly local however and extremely patchwork. Colleges serving large areas with multiple local authorities struggled to adapt to demand and some areas did not develop systematic arrangements in any shape or form. Barriers existed in terms of local authority boundaries, timetabling alignment, travel arrangements and institutional desire to participate.

## Developing the Young Workforce

The impetus to develop what we now know, and regularly report on, as School-College Partnerships came from the findings of the *Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce*<sup>4</sup> led by Sir Ian Wood and first published as a government strategy in December 2014. Instigated as a result of widespread youth unemployment, and a growing sense that the curriculum in schools was not

adequately preparing young people for the world of work, the report focused on creating new pathways into work and work experience for young people with colleges playing a major intermediary role:

➤ **‘Our objective is a world class system of vocational education, in which colleges work with schools and employers to deliver learning that is directly relevant to getting a job, as a mainstream option for all pupils in the Senior Phase of secondary school.’**

Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy, 2014, Section 2<sup>5</sup>

The strategy goes on to identify the role of colleges in vocational education:

➤ **‘The key challenge for colleges lies in developing more productive partnerships with local authorities, schools and with employers, to understand how these improve learner experiences and outcomes.’**

Colleges, with their long-established relationships with employers through delivering apprenticeships in a variety of trades and subjects, were identified as the key vehicle for improving vocational training across the whole education system. Colleges also had access to laboratories, workshops, on the job training environments for careers such as catering and hair and beauty and ICT facilities well beyond the resources available in most schools. Courses were designed on the principle of young people spending part of their week in school and part in college as a matter of routine.

4 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-working-commission-developing-scotlands-young-workforce-final-report/>

5 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-young-workforce-scotlands-youth-employment-strategy/pages/4/>

In addition, many colleges have experience of providing successful transition courses to allow young people with additional support needs, who may have struggled to engage in school, to be supported to develop their life skills in a more personalised and flexible learning environment. The 'Transitions to Learning and Work' programme at Glasgow Kelvin College is a good example of this.<sup>6</sup>

## Curriculum for Excellence

During the same period the *Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>7</sup> was being introduced, focusing on the key capacities of young people, demanding experiential forms of learning, moving away from the traditional read, learn, and repeat forms of assessment and examination that had contributed to the disconnect between schools and the world of work as identified by the *Developing the Young Workforce* report.

Colleges were well placed to contribute to the changing curriculum having had their own learning and teaching revolution in the late twentieth century with the Munn and Dunning<sup>8</sup> reforms that had seen the modularisation of subject delivery, the introduction of continuous assessment and a large-scale movement away from a focus on examinations and end testing.

## Developing the Young Workforce: from strategy to reality

The Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) strategy set out a clear annual plan to build from early adopter forms of School-College Partnerships to developing formal Senior Phase vocational pathways, with a reporting structure informed by Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skills Assessments and clearly laid out and defined in all college outcome agreements.

An early focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects and gender equality is evident in this planning process. Active engagement in 2014 was expected to develop into a national system by 2021:

➤ **'College outcome agreements for academic year 2021/22 reflect a regional curriculum, with vocational options widely available, informed by secondary schools, local authorities and employers.'**

Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy, 2014, Section 2

The *15-24 Learner Journey Review*<sup>9</sup> published in May 2018 called for pathways for young people tailored to their strengths and interests embedding a more balanced and personalised offer in education.

The Review recognised that to achieve this we needed better careers advice focused on longer term careers, more work-based learning, and shorter learner journeys to enable smooth and efficient progress through the post-16 system.

6 <https://bit.ly/GKCTransitions>

7 <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence>

8 See summary in *National Qualifications: A Short History (SQA 2008)* [https://www.sqa.org.uk/files\\_ccc/PNP\\_ResearchReport3\\_NationalQualificationsAShortHistory.pdf](https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/PNP_ResearchReport3_NationalQualificationsAShortHistory.pdf)

9 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/15-24-learner-journey-review-9781788518741/>

At the same time clear standards for work experience, careers information and guidance were being developed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS)<sup>10</sup> among others to help guide learners and those working with them. Education Scotland guidance was also made available in the self-evaluation frameworks contained in How Good is our School<sup>11</sup> and How Good is our College<sup>12</sup>.

## The present

As described elsewhere in this report, in the past few years the numbers of young people involved in School-College Partnerships has exceeded 60,000 and has seen significant year on year increases. We have now reached the point where a significant proportion of college activity (around 22%) can be defined as being part of a School-College Partnership and these activities support all stages of the learner journey from Primary to Senior Phase including pupils with additional support needs.

In the central section of this report, we review the key characteristics of a successful School-College Partnership with reference to a range of case studies that illustrate the range and variety of activity that now comes under this heading.

## Defining a School-College Partnership

The range and variety of activities that are delivered by partnership working between schools and colleges means that a detailed definition of the term ‘School-College Partnership’ is an elusive concept. As we have noted, not only do these partnerships support all stages of the learner journey and play a central role in the development of skills for work, they also have a role to play for those pupils facing multiple disadvantage and with additional support needs, where colleges can provide a range of different approaches to learning.

With that in mind, this report proposes the general definition of a School-College Partnership as:

**➤ any learning activity that involves young people aged 3-18 that is delivered by a college in collaboration with a school, either in school or in college, with a broad focus on skills for life and work and often with the involvement of employers.**

It does not always end in a formal qualification but is normally related to identified skills requirements and qualification frameworks as defined in regional and national plans.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/hgios4/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/how-good-is-our-college>

## The impact of the COVID pandemic

The 2020-21 global pandemic has had an impact across two academic years and is likely to continue to affect provision for several years to come. With lockdown restrictions not starting until late March 2020, the principal challenge for the 2019-20 session was in moving the final weeks of teaching online and managing assessments without being able to hold conventional exams and practical tests. At the time, the working assumption was, generally, that the following (2020-21) academic year would involve a return to something approaching normality.

However, with the arrival of a spike in cases in autumn 2020 and a renewal of restrictions, the principal impact of the pandemic has, in fact, been on the 2020-21 academic year and on planning for 2021-22.

Adaptation to blended and online learning when the pandemic hit was broadly successful with colleges working closely with their local authorities. While noting that a virtual school offer was easy to plan for it was clear that, as one college summarised, in the case of the pupils 'some thrived and some struggled' to engage with the fully online approach. This however reflects the general challenges of online and hybrid learning and is not unique to School-College Partnership courses.

The principal challenges were in practical subjects, where in many cases provision ceased altogether for significant periods. Adaptations were made to deal with this but pupils on such courses have had far less practical experience than those in previous years. The case studies that inform this report give a wide range of examples of innovative practice which include creative responses to the pandemic.

An impact has been seen in disengagement from some courses, requests for deferrals and a dip in applications for some courses for 2021-22. This has still to be quantified at national level but should be seen in the context of the year-on-year increases in participation outlined elsewhere in this report.

While the COVID challenges relate in part to the position of School-College Partnerships in the education policy landscape and the need for an understanding of their importance to the learner journey, the robustness of the collaborative arrangements and the strength of the systems of partnership are likely to ensure that the upward trajectory of engagement with these activities will continue as we emerge from the restrictions and challenges of the past eighteen months.

The impact of the pandemic and the response of colleges to it is noted at various points in this report, but we have not set out to undertake a comprehensive review of its effect. The report focuses on the longer-term trends in School-College Partnership development in the belief that these will outlast the current 'COVID dip' in participation mentioned below, and that the innovations and responses for which the pandemic has acted as a catalyst will form a key part of the future development of our skills pathways and support for learners.

# SECTION 4: SCHOOL-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS AND THE SKILLS AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

## Preparing for the world of work

Whilst the original focus in the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) strategy was on Senior Phase and school pupils preparing to leave school, in reality significant work has been achieved in the involvement of younger learners through the drive to increase the quality of what is now known as Broad General Education (BGE). This is important in raising the status of work-ready training to those young people on the cusp of key career decision-making.

It is not usual for skills interventions to start with the very young but, as practitioners know, unless we can start to change behaviours and offer choices and knowledge at an early stage in a young person's development then opportunities to influence are often missed for ever.

School-College Partnerships lie at the heart of a significant and progressive intervention into the way we prepare young people for the world of work, and indeed the wider world. There are many other players in the space in addition to schools and colleges and the work of employer bodies, Skills Development Scotland, Education Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council and local authorities have all played a part in promoting the partnerships and ensuring alignment and coherent approaches across Scotland.

The *15-24 Learner Journey Review* summarises the work here as an attempt to:

➤ **'Co-create and co-deliver the Senior Phase curriculum, aligning timetables, making maximum use of the technical expertise and (human and financial) resources across the combined estate to create the best place to learn.'**

*15-24 Learner Journey Review  
Executive Summary Para. 17<sup>13</sup>*

The introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs)<sup>14</sup>, many of them constructed through a balance of school, college and work experience has also contributed significantly to the development of School-College Partnerships. Increasingly popular and heavily promoted by government, colleges and Skills Development Scotland, the Foundation Apprenticeship has its roots in the relationships developed via School-College Partnerships and has acted as a stabilising, structural construct to realise the potential of the collaboration between educator and employer in developing young peoples' knowledge and experience of the world of work, one of the key aims of the original Developing the Young Workforce report. Foundation Apprenticeships include SCQF level 6 and pilot activity at SCQF levels 4 and 5. This offers scope for a range of school aged learners to participate in collaborative work- based learning provision.

13 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/15-24-learner-journey-review-9781788518741/pages/2/>

14 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/apprenticeships/foundation-apprenticeships/>

## Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

In terms of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)<sup>15</sup> credit rating system, School-College Partnerships cover a wide range starting from Life Skills at SCQF level 1, through Skills for Work programmes at levels 3 and 4 to the Senior Phase and Foundation Apprenticeships spanning levels 4, 5 and 6.

There are also now examples of School-College Partnerships covering levels 7 and 8 as school pupils complete HNC/D level qualifications. A significant driver of level 7 and 8 qualifications are in the digital/computing subject area where the resources and staff expertise in colleges remains significantly ahead of schools. The skills gaps and obvious requirement for more trained computer programmers and digital professionals will ensure that this route will continue to grow.

## Skills 4.0

In terms of the need to develop meta-skills in our young people and the adoption of the Skills 4.0 model developed by Skills Development Scotland<sup>16</sup>, the challenge for the qualification and the skills system is to move swiftly enough to react to the changing needs of the workplace.

 **‘Scotland’s workforce needs constantly developing skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive in this complex, ever changing environment.’**

Professor Tom Devine quoted in Skills 4.0:  
A skills model to drive Scotland’s future, p.5

Meta-skills provide a way of looking at the key generic skills required to be successful, broken down under three key themes:

- Self-management
- Social intelligence
- Innovation

The SDS meta-skills framework, together with the ‘four capacities’ of the Curriculum for Excellence (see below) provides a basis for profiling the skills required for the world of work (as demonstrated in our case studies below).

## Curriculum for Excellence

It is acknowledged within the Skills 4.0 model that Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) provides a good base to build on in our understanding and practical application of developing thinking around meta-skills.

The four capacities<sup>17</sup> already specify the need for learners in the Scottish system to be:

- successful learners
- confident individuals
- responsible citizens
- effective contributors

School-College Partnerships need to be designed to enhance the understanding of the imperative to focus on meta-skills as the economy and work patterns change. They can provide a major focus for leading on the development and understanding of the ways in which meta-skills can be designed into the curriculum and become a natural part of the education system. By providing the opportunity to work with young and very young learners to increase the understanding of meta-skills and to design curriculum models and pedagogy to encourage their understanding, School-College Partnerships provide a stimulating space.

<sup>15</sup> <https://scqf.org.uk/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40\\_a-skills-model.pdf](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40_a-skills-model.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <https://scotlandscurriculum.scot/3/>

## The OECD Review of Curriculum for Excellence

In June 2021 the OECD published its review of CfE, *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*<sup>18</sup>.

A range of stakeholders from the college sector were interviewed in the course of the OECD research and while colleges themselves do not feature prominently in the analysis the themes in the current report align well with the OECD recommendations, which the Scottish Government has committed to taking forward.

The OECD report highlights the fact that:

➤ **'education beyond secondary levels offers a range of choice for students, both in schools, colleges of further education and other educational settings which can be combined.'**

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence:  
Into the Future, p.35 (our italics)

In particular Recommendation 1 of the report aligns well with the further development of School-College Partnerships:

➤ **Balance Curriculum for Excellence so students can fully benefit from a coherent learning experience from 3-18 years.**

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence:  
Into the Future, p.13

Within this overall recommendation, the sub-recommendation 1.3 proposes to "adapt the Senior Phase to match the vision of Curriculum for Excellence." In doing so the detailed notes on this recommendation (p.121) highlight the need to offer a 'clear structure for the diversity of pathways' offered to learners. This diversity of pathways needs to include a lifelong learning element for learners unable to achieve economic viability in the 'standard' way, an area where colleges are well placed to provide support.

Part of this detailed recommendation is worth quoting at greater length (emphasis added):

➤ **The OECD team recognises Scotland's numerous efforts to diversify learning experiences in the Senior Phase, seeking variety in the choice of pathways, subject specialisation, and qualifications offered to students, which aligns well with CfE ambitions. A possibility to clarify the structure of the Senior Phase, without restricting its diversity, could be to define a number of typical pathways or profiles for upper-secondary education with a limited number of compulsory courses, specialisation courses, and room or additional or optional units. *These should be designed taking into account the need for coherence for students in their learning pathways of CfE from ages 3 to 18 years. Schools' curriculum and timetables within a school should allow for a different student to take the same course, either as a specialisation part of one's profile, or as another's optional course. Such a structure could help students and their parents better understand and navigate the choice of subjects and qualifications, allowing students both to take coherent bundles of courses and to design their own pathway as they see fit. To explore this or other feasible re-design alternatives for the Senior Phase, a wide spectrum of stakeholders, experts and partners from various fields should be involved in a collaborative process.***

It will be seen from our description of the key characteristics of School-College Partnerships in this report (and from the associated case studies) that the increased choice and opportunities represented by them are well-aligned to a collaborative process that supports a range of flexible pathways, qualifications and specialisms for students.

18 [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence\\_bf624417-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence_bf624417-en)

The OECD's theme of the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (integrations referred to as "competencies") that enables students to perform in ill-defined environments, thus allowing them to navigate a fast-paced and uncertain world, is central to the development of School-College Partnerships. The definition of competencies as integrative and with a broad performance orientation allows the debate to shift away from the traditional "knowledge versus skills" focus by acknowledging the importance of both in learning.

The over-arching theme of collaboration, integration and co-creation that characterises School-College Partnerships can clearly play a prominent role in the implementation of the OECD recommendations, as can their presence at all stages of the learner journey.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

School-College Partnerships to be recognised and identified as a key vehicle for the implementation of the OECD's *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* recommendations on the creation of a coherent learning experience for young people aged 3-18.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

SFC to recognise the importance of the School-College Partnership in future funding as an integral part of the learner journey, particularly in work-based learning and vocational qualifications (for example Foundation Apprenticeships in the Senior Phase) and in the light of the OECD's *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* report and actions. School-College Partnerships give real experience of potential career pathways and career decision-making from an early age through primary and into the broad general education and the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

## Local Authorities

The OECD report also highlights the potential for Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) to play a greater role in co-ordination of these developments, and there is a natural alignment with colleges as regional skills providers in this context.

The partnership working evident across Scotland to embed School-College Partnerships and to grow the numbers of participants is evidence of hard work, strategic alignment, and increasingly effective collaboration between the college and schools systems.

This work is not easy and requires systems thinking, the ability to change custom and practice, and significant levels of trust. Data sharing, co-design, changes in staff roles and real strategic intent is required to overcome obstacles and to provide the construction of the forms of pathways envisaged in the original DYW report and more recently in the OECD report.

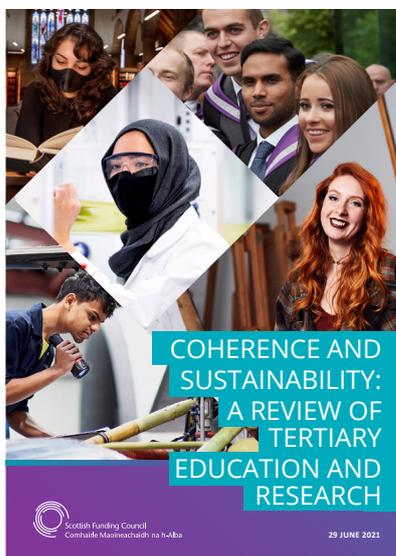
The evidence in terms of rising participant levels and case studies of the progress of young people is already demonstrating the success of the model. Existing parts of the system, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and Community Planning Partnerships also have a part to play in normalising and further embedding genuine collaborative planning at the heart of the school-college system.

## Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research

In June 2021 the Scottish Funding Council Published the final report of its review of tertiary education and research<sup>19</sup>. This major report covers the whole of tertiary education and research, with key recommendations on system change, sustainability, strategic planning, widening access and student support, research and knowledge exchange and international education.

Crucially, the review recognises the importance of multiple pathways for learners and the key role of joint provision with schools. There is a strong focus on good support and guidance to enable students to understand the different pathways, the removal of duplication and improved recognition of prior learning, improving data sharing and performance monitoring across sectors and reviewing funding arrangements to enable increased access and improve learner pathways (p.63).

The present report has many synergies with these themes, not least in the need for improved collection and analysis of performance data for School-College Partnerships (see below) and this is reflected in our recommendations.



There is a strong focus in the report on ‘a coherent system’ and what that means for stakeholders. In particular, in the context of School-College Partnerships, it is worth highlighting the statement of what a coherent system means for the learner:

➤ **You have learning, skills and qualifications that provide knowledge and attributes that are transferable, updateable and relevant internationally.**

**Wherever you live and wherever you come from, you have regional access to education up to SCQF level 8 (Higher National Diploma, Diploma for Higher Education).**

**You have opportunities for learning and training that contribute to Scotland’s social and economic prosperity over your lifetime, irrespective of mode or level of study.**

**You take fewer wrong turns, dead ends, and repeats, and you have effective guidance and information to help you find an efficient path through your learner journey.**

*SFC (2021) Coherence and Sustainability:  
A Review of Tertiary Education and Research, p.26*

As will be seen from the later sections of this report, School-College Partnerships have a strong focus on supporting a learner’s understanding of career pathways and skills requirements from an early age, coupled with strong employer relationships that encourage experience of the workplace and support career planning and integrated pathways. They are coordinated by colleges acting as regional anchor institutions providing leadership and making connections as well as developing and validating qualifications. The SFC report recognises this role and our aim in the present report is to reinforce an understanding of the key role that School-College Partnerships, already reaching a fifth of Senior Phase pupils as well as many in Primary and BGE, will play in taking the SFC’s recommendations

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Review/coherence-and-sustainability.pdf>

forward in partnership with schools, local authorities and national agencies.

For this reason, we recommend that the SFC commissions additional work as an extension to this report to map the current activity of colleges working in partnership with schools and local authorities with a view to identifying existing and planned collaborative working that can be extended to support the implementation of the review. This would help to address the identified tensions in the OECD review between local curriculum flexibility and the need for coherence to achieve system-wide objectives. By design, the Curriculum for Excellence enshrines the principle of local curriculum flexibility since it gives schools the autonomy to design their own curriculum to best respond to students' needs, and partnership with colleges can help to link the local and system-wide requirements of the learner journey.



### RECOMMENDATION 3

SFC to commission a mapping exercise to identify existing and planned School-College Partnership activity that can be developed or extended to support the implementation of the learner-journey and skills-related recommendations of the SFC's *Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research*.

There are a number of key recommendations in the SFC review that we would particularly highlight as relevant to this mapping work. These recommendations are found in the sections of the report on system change, impact, a coherent education and skills system and frameworks for the future.

Under system change, the review highlights the need for a clear strategic, longer term vision and intent for the future of tertiary education and a more systematic approach to how coherent tertiary education and skills are planned. This is linked to a new National Impact Framework that will link in turn to national and international targets. As will be seen from this report, we have highlighted the need for further work to better understand the scale and impact of School-College Partnerships and to provide central resources to support their planning, delivery and evaluation. We would therefore identify strongly with these recommendations and propose that School-College Partnerships will have a key role to play in developing and supporting the vision.

Related to this, the SFC recommendation on the convening of a Tertiary Provision Pathfinders group or groups to better explore future tertiary and skills strategic planning and partnership at a regional level is an ideal platform to integrate the learning and experience from our innovative School-College Partnerships and we would strongly recommend that there is a high level of representation from college staff involved in supporting these partnerships within the Pathfinder groups.

School-College Partnerships have particularly strong links with skills for work in areas such as STEM, computing and creative and digital media (see case studies below) that include employer partnerships and engagements at all levels of the learner journey. In addition, college staff involved in delivering School-College Partnerships have a good understanding of their inclusive nature, encompassing all ages and stages including the most vulnerable supported learners with more profound needs that prevent them from being categorised within 'social and economic prosperity' in the narrow sense. Such experience will surely form the core of the future vision for inclusive skills pathways.

Finally, the SFC review highlights the revision of Outcome Agreements and the enhancement of data, analytics and evidence sharing, all areas where this report also makes recommendations for further work. As with the OECD report, there is a clear alignment between the aims of the SFC review and the direction of travel for School-College Partnerships and the Curriculum and Assessment Board, as the commissioning body for the present report, will no doubt wish to ensure a high profile

for the work of School-College Partnerships in the implementation of both reports. This should extend to links across sector boundaries, for example with the Regional Improvement Collaboratives which, as shown in the 2018 interim review<sup>20</sup>, have focussed principally on enhancing collaborative working between schools at a regional level rather than linking to other providers such as colleges.



#### RECOMMENDATION 4

Colleges to work with SFC to ensure that key staff involved in developing and delivering School-College Partnerships are included in the implementation of the SFC's *Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research* through the work of the proposed Tertiary Provision Pathfinders, the review of Outcome Agreements, the related data, analytics and evidence-sharing work and the development of the National Impact Framework.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/regional-improvement-collaboratives-rics-interim-review/documents/>

# SECTION 5: THE SCALE OF SCHOOL-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

## Introduction

This section of the report provides a picture of the growth of School-College Partnership activity in recent years against a range of categories, with a brief commentary.

The principal sources of data accessed were the Scottish Funding Council's InFact database, Skills Development Scotland (for Foundation Apprenticeships), the Scottish Government's School Level Summary Statistics and Scottish Pupil Census and the annual reports of Developing the Young Workforce.

One of the principal issues with measuring the success of School-College Partnerships is that a large proportion of them are not in fact assessed activities. There is currently no nationally available data set that would allow a statistical analysis of the full lifecycle of School-College Partnership activity from enrolment to the ultimate destination of the students.

We recommend that as a follow-up to this report and with support from the SFC and local authorities, a project is commissioned to establish an annual reporting cycle for School-College Partnerships that provides a similar statistical report to those provided for widening access activities. Such a report would cut across the data silos in the education sector and provide a rich source of data for the measurement of success in learner journey development. As part of this work, we would also recommend that the opportunity to highlight and analyse the impact of School-College Partnerships within existing statistical reports should be explored with the relevant stakeholders. We would anticipate that this work would also, as a starting point, consider the definition of a successful School-College Partnership and what key performance indicators exist or should be developed to measure success.

For the purposes of this report, we have concentrated on a range of key indicators:

1. School-College Partnership participation.
  - a. All School-College Partnership Enrolments 2013-14 to 2019-20.
  - b. Percentage of all Secondary School pupils participating in School-College Partnerships 2013-14 to 2019-20.
  - c. Percentage of S1-S3 pupils participating in School-College Partnerships 2013-14 to 2019-20.
  - d. Percentage of Senior Phase pupils participating in School-College Partnerships 2013-14 to 2019-20.
  - e. Distribution of 2019-20 School-College Enrolments by School Year.
2. Secondary School Students as a percentage of all FE students.
3. Senior Phase Vocational Pathway Enrolments 2013-14 to 2019-20.
4. Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) Enrolments 2016-17 to 2019-20.
5. SFC Funding Credits.
  - a. SFC Funding Credits 2013-14 to 2019-20.
  - b. Secondary School credit activity as a percentage of all FE credits.
6. Completion Rates.
  - a. Secondary School-College positive outcome rate.
  - b. Secondary School-College successful completion rate.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

Establish an annual statistical report on School-College Partnerships to allow meaningful and consistent comparison across school/college provision and mapping to local planning processes including regional skills assessments. The report will interrogate cross-sectoral data sources to provide key performance indicators/ measures of success on enrolment, progression, attainment and positive destinations for all students at national and regional levels.

## Key trends from the data

### The 'COVID-related dip'.

As will be seen in all the indicators, there has been a distinct 'COVID-related dip' in the upward trajectory of engagement with School-College Partnerships in the 2019-20 session. This dip is likely to have carried forward into 2020-21 and possibly 2021-22 given the uncertainty about the speed of return to a more 'normal' educational environment. This should however be seen in the context of the rapid growth in engagement with School-College Partnerships from 2013-14 to the present. It is anticipated that the 'COVID-related dip' will be temporary, and that this upward trajectory will continue, assuming that the expansion and development of School-College Partnership opportunities continues. The qualitative evidence in this report makes a strong case for action at a policy level to ensure that this is the case, as does the clear alignment with the recommendations of the OECD review and the direction of travel evident in the SFC's review process.



Moray College UHI – school pupils studying hairdressing.

## General trends from the data

Since 2013-14 there has been an average **year-on-year growth of 16%** in school pupils enrolled in college courses, peaking at 72,745 enrolments in 2018-19 (representing 59,778 individual pupils) before a COVID-related dip in numbers in 2019-20 (although this still represents numbers increasing by 70% over 2013-14).

The percentage of total college enrolments represented by high school students has remained reasonably stable over the past four years, at an average of 17.5% of all enrolments. This indicates that the overall growth in School-College Partnership participation in that period has come from increasing participation from primary school pupils.

In 2018-19, 16% of all secondary school pupils were enrolled in a School-College Partnership, with a slight dip in 2019-20 to 13% as a result of COVID restrictions. The 2018-19 figure includes 9.6% of S1-S3 pupils and 22.3% of Senior Phase pupils. With the slight dip in 2019-20, Senior Phase enrolments are still at over 20%, meaning that **a fifth of Senior Phase pupils are involved in a School-College Partnership.**

The distribution of secondary school School-College Partnership enrolments in 2019 shows that **71% of pupils participating in School-College Partnerships were in Senior Phase** with 29% in S1-S3. The largest group were S4 pupils, who made up 49% of School-College Partnership enrolments.

Significant growth has been observed in enrolments to Senior Phase Vocational Pathways (SPVPs) with average annual increases of 28%, and an overall percentage increase between 2013/14 and 2019/20 of 320%. In 2019-20, 8,884 pupils were enrolled in SPVPs.

Within this, there has been a rapid growth in Foundation Apprenticeship participation, with a ninefold increase from 2016-17 to 2019-20, including the total more than doubling between 2018-19 and 2019-20. This demonstrates the growing importance of Foundation Apprenticeships to the School-College Partnership provision.

In terms of SFC funding credits, the percentage increase across the period under review was 33.4%, considerably lower than the increases in enrolments and numbers of students, indicating that, typically, school college programme enrolments are increasingly attracting fewer funding credits per enrolment.

Based on the Scottish Funding Council's figures, we can say that over the 2013-2018 period an average of 94.8% of pupils completed their School-College Partnership course, whether or not that course was formally assessed. Where the course did include a formal assessment there was an average 70.3% pass rate over the same period. These figures are drawn from the SFC's InFact database and give a general sense of the levels of success for pupils undertaking School-College Partnerships, however further investigation would be required before any specific conclusions could be drawn.

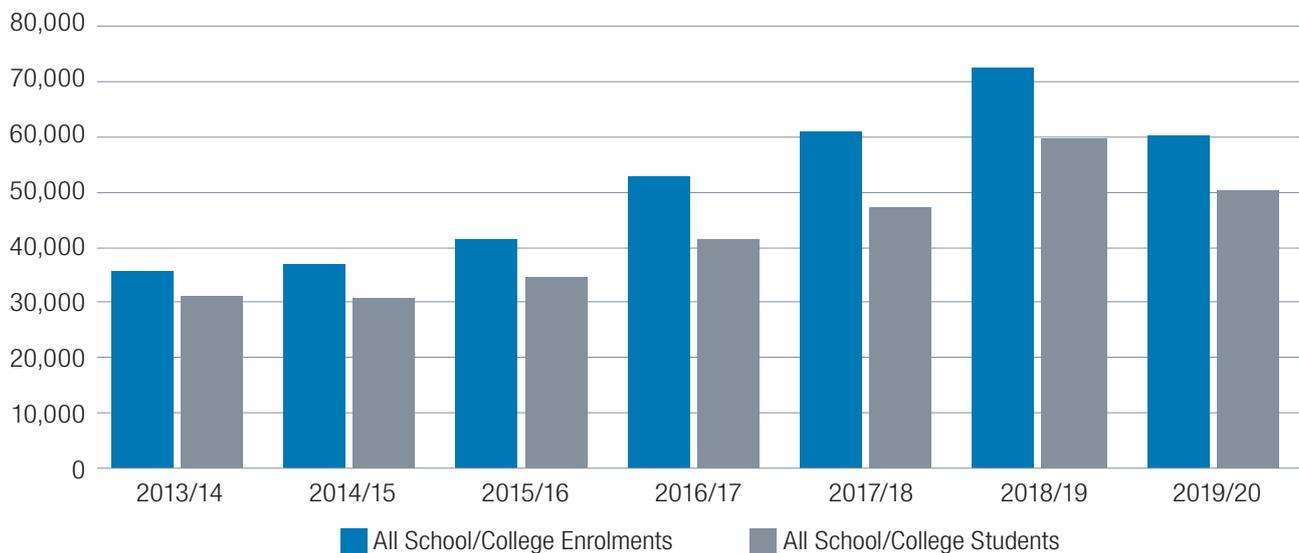
## Commentary on individual data sets

### 1. School-College Partnership Participation

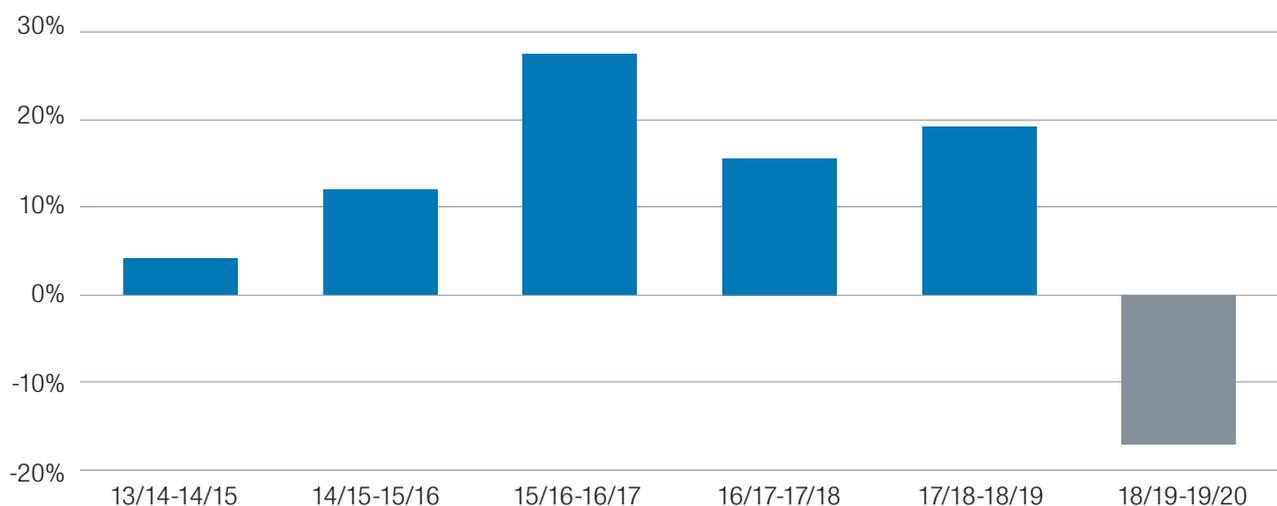
#### 1a. All School-College Enrolments 2013-14 to 2019-20

Enrolments by School Pupils in College courses have increased significantly from 35,500 enrolments (31,000 students) in 2013/14, peaking at almost 73,000 enrolments by 60,000 students in 2018/19. Across all years, enrolments have increased by 70% while the number of students participating has increased by 60% indicating that students have become more likely to engage with more than one school-college programme. The year-on-year growth in enrolments averaged 16%, but a drop was observed in 2019/20 as a result of COVID restrictions from March 2020.

#### All School/College Enrolments and Students 2013/14 – 2019/20



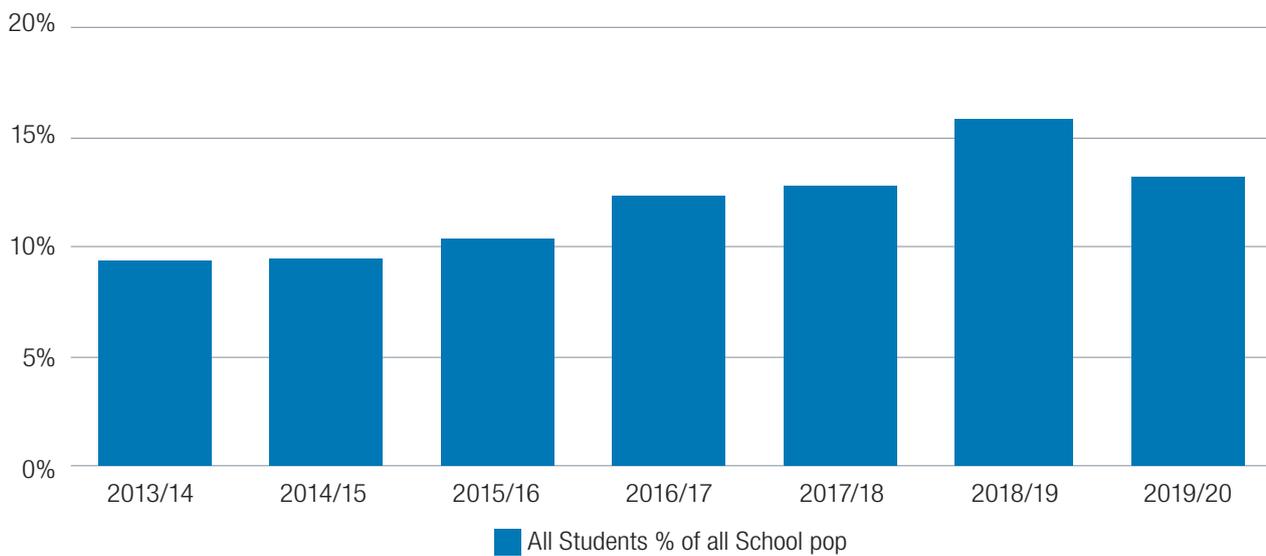
#### Year on Year Growth – All School/College Enrolments



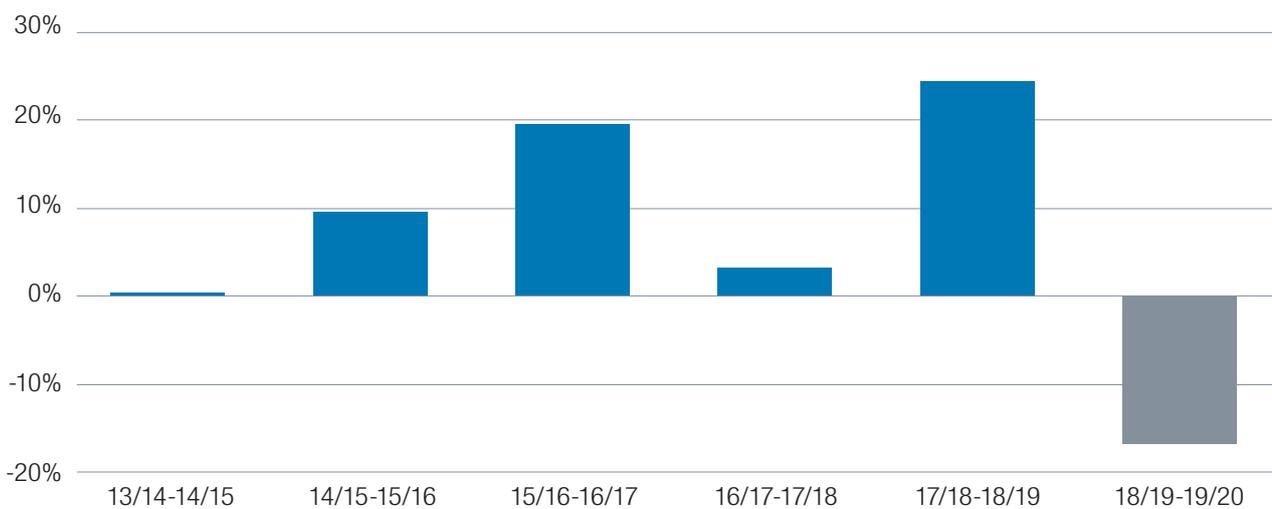
## 1b. Percentage of all Secondary School pupils participating in School-College Partnerships 2013-14 to 2019-20

Reflecting the increases observed in the percentages of Senior Phase and S1-S3 populations, there has been steady growth overall in the proportion of secondary school pupils participating in school-college programmes, from under 10% of all secondary school pupils in 2013/14 to 16% in 2018/19 and 13.2% in 2019/20. The drop in 2019/20 reflects the Covid measures in place from March 2020 which restricted activity from that point.

### % of All Secondary School Pupils Participating in School/College Programmes



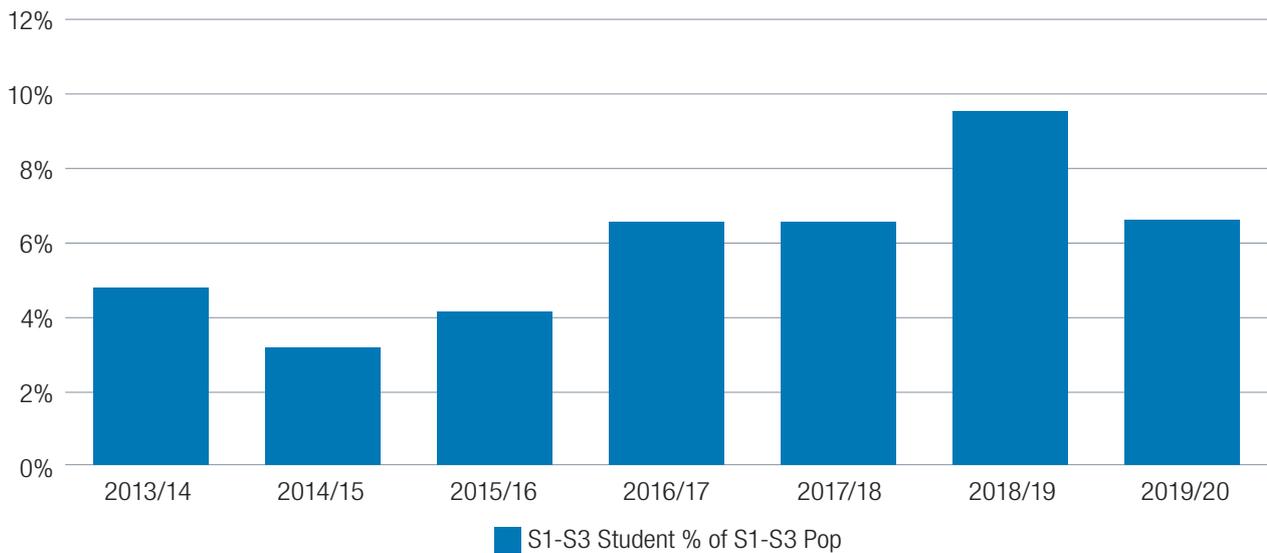
### Year on Year Growth – S1-S6 College Enrolments as % of Secondary School Population



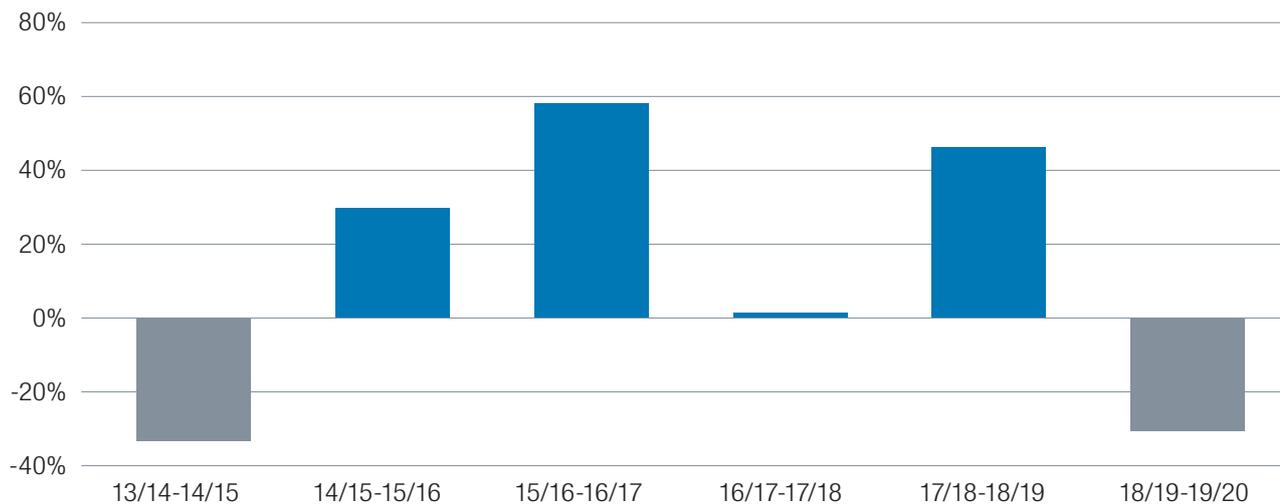
**1c. Percentage of S1-S3 pupils participating in School-College Partnerships 2013-14 to 2019-20**

While not as significant as the rate of increase in participation observed among Senior Phase pupils, there has also been sustained growth in participation by S1-S3 pupils, increasing from 4.8% in 2013/14 and 3.2% in 2014/15 to a peak of 9.6% in 2018/19. There was a small (Covid) drop in the percentage of the S1-S3 school population in 2019/20 to 6.6%. The increase in the percentage of the S1-S3 population participating across all years is c.39%

**% of S1-S3 Pupils Participating in School/College Programmes**



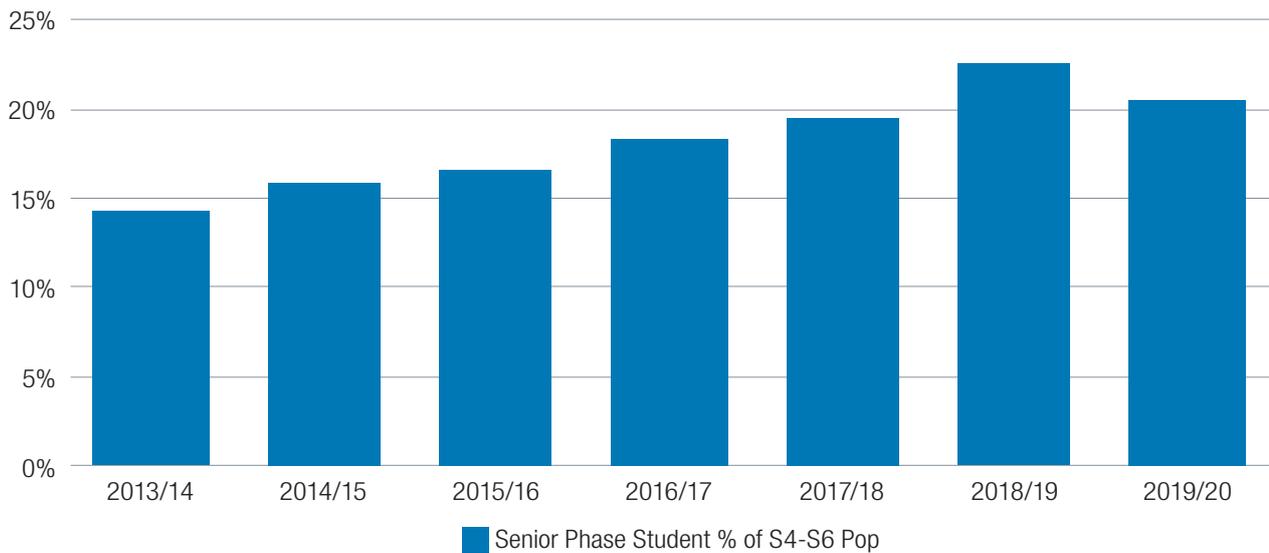
**Year on Year Growth - S1 - S3 College Enrolments as % of Secondary School S1-S3 Population**



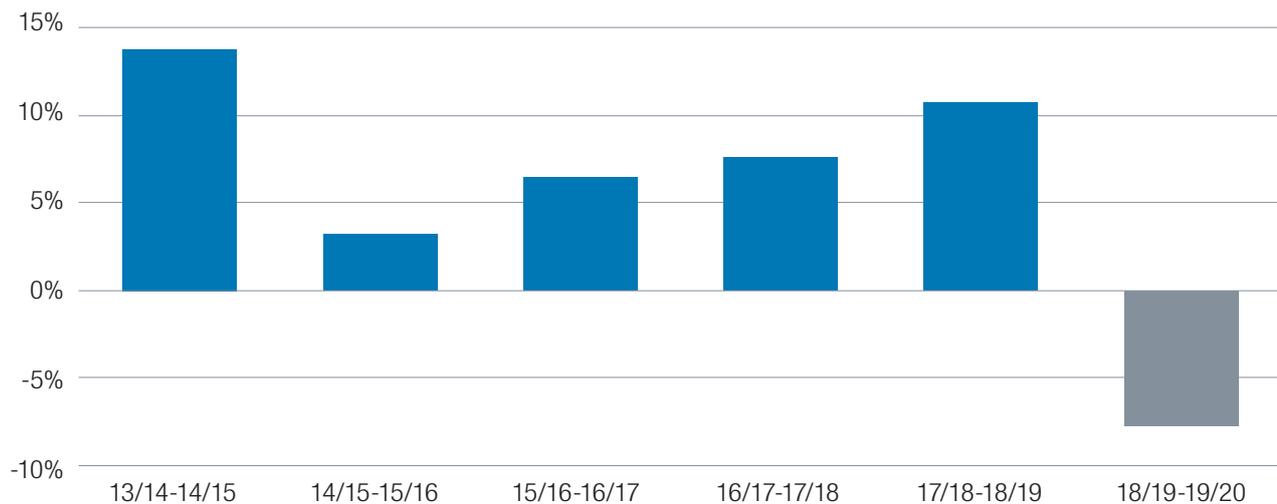
### 1d. Percentage of Senior Phase pupils participating in School-College Partnerships 2013-14 to 2019-20

There has been a steady increase in the percentage of Senior Phase pupils participating, from 14.3% of Senior Phase pupils in 2013/14 to 22.5% in 2018/19, and a (Covid) drop to 20.6% in 2019/20. The overall percentage increase observed between 2013/14 and 2019/20 is c.44%, with average annual percentage increases (excluding 2019/20) of c.10%.

#### % of Senior Phase Pupils Participating in School/College Programmes



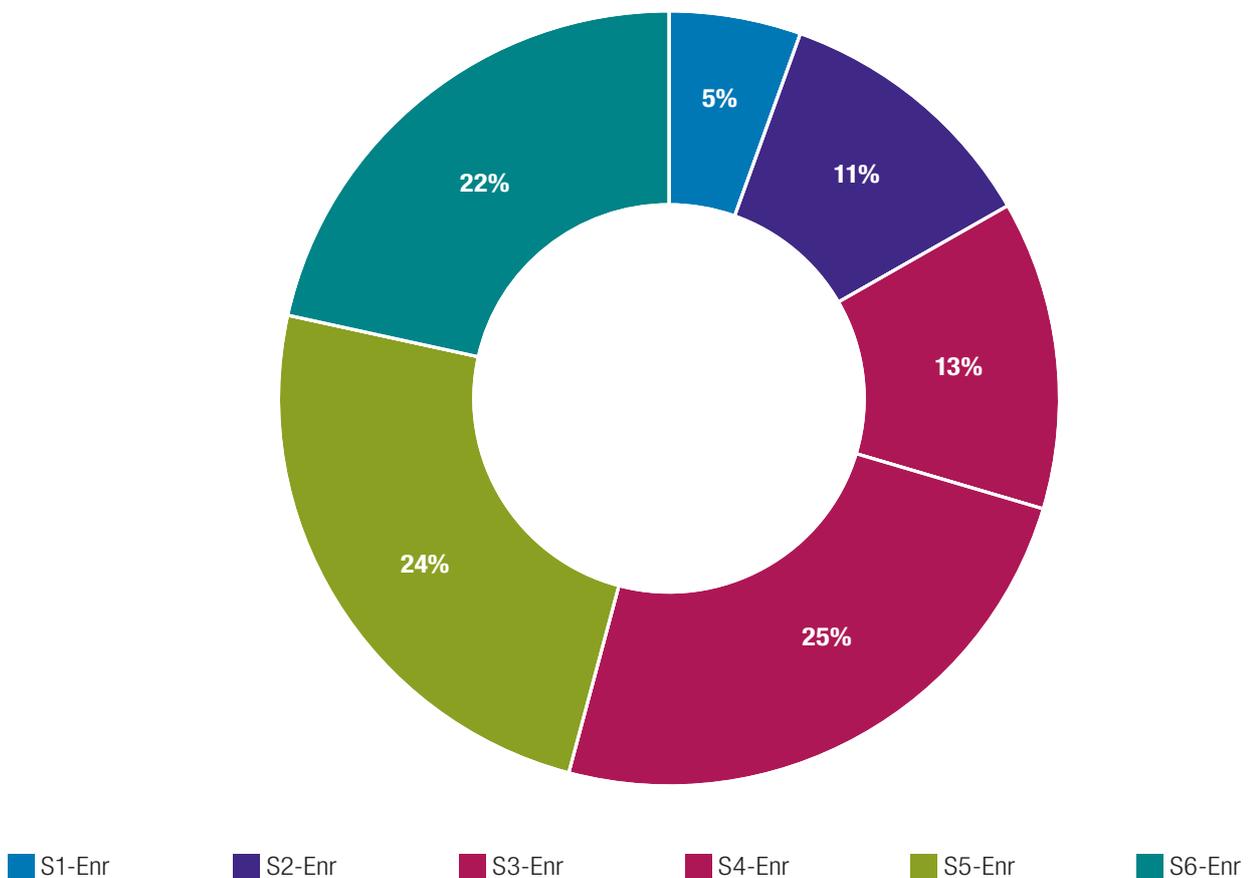
#### Year on Year Growth - Senior Phase/College Enrolments



### 1e. Distribution of 2019-20 School-College Enrolments by School Year

Consistent with the observation of the participation rates among S1-S3 pupils and Senior Phase pupils, most of the secondary school college activity is undertaken by those in Senior Phase, with S4 and S5 pupils accounting for 49% of activity with S6 pupils accounting for a further 22%. S1-S3 pupils account for just over one quarter of activity (29%). S4 participation is highest at 25% of the secondary school college activity, dropping to 24% (S5) and 22% (S6) as the number of pupils remaining in school after S4 and S5 reduces.

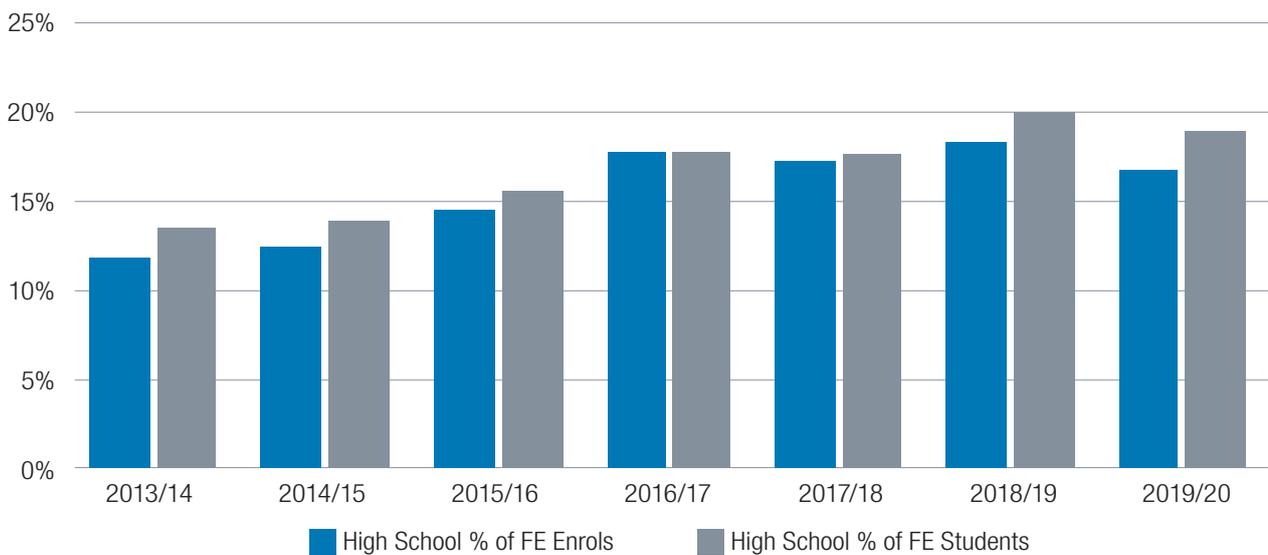
#### Distribution of 2019/20 School/College Enrolments by School Year



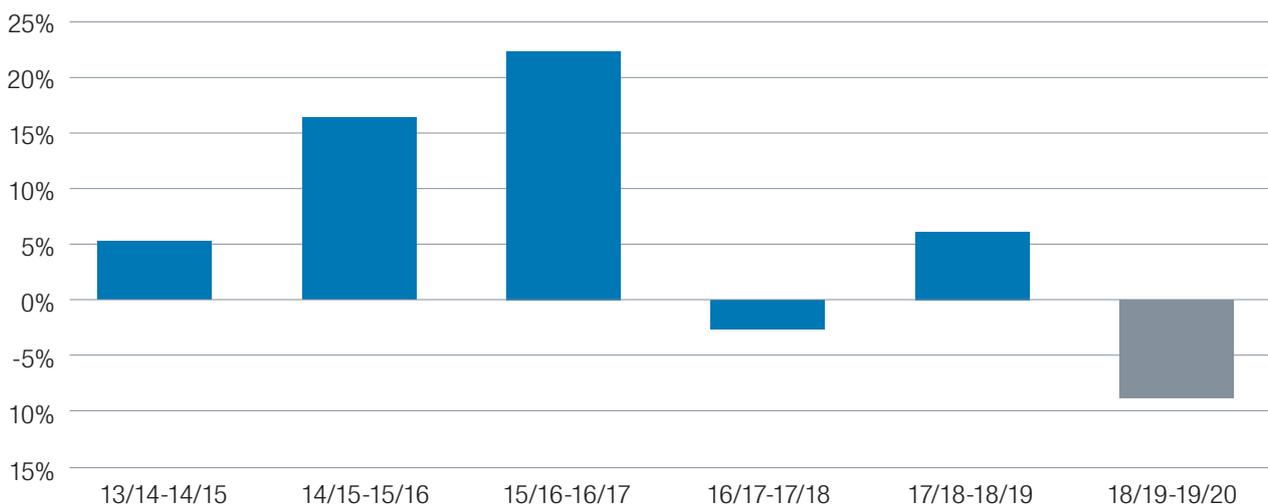
## 2. Secondary School Students as a percentage of all FE students

While the majority of school-college programme participants are secondary school pupils, the percentage of all FE enrolments and students by secondary school pupils has risen at a lower rate than overall, indicating greater levels of participation from Primary School pupils. The overall increase measure in enrolments by secondary school pupils as a percentage of all FE activity has risen from c.12% in 2013/14 to c.18% in 2018/19, with a slight drop in 2019/20 to c.17%, again as a result of COVID restrictions in place from March 2020.

### All Secondary School Pupils as % of All FE 2013/14-2019/20



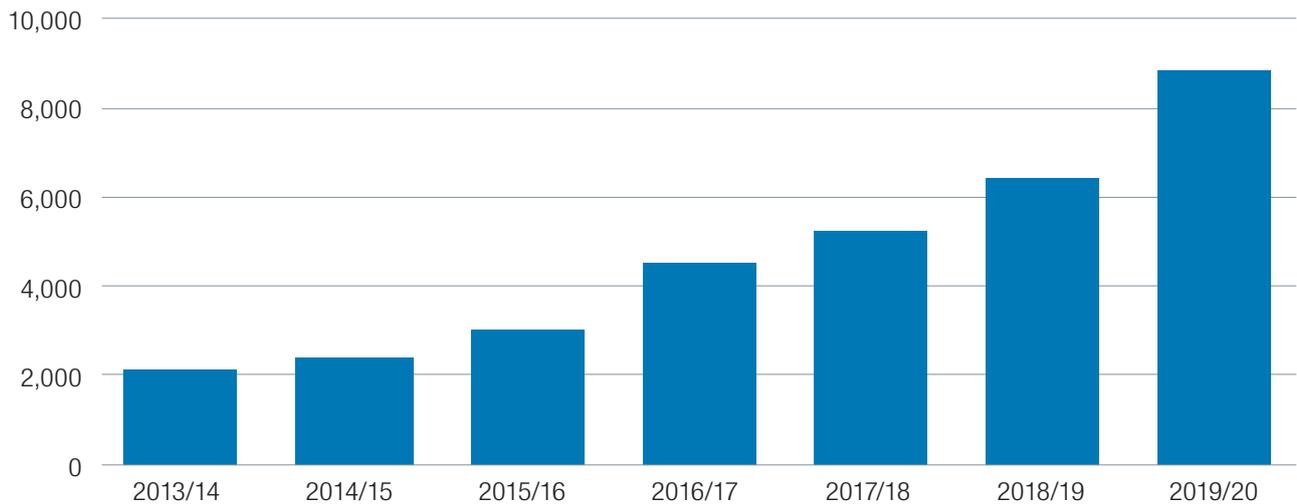
### Year on Year Growth - Secondary School Pupils as % of FE Enrolments



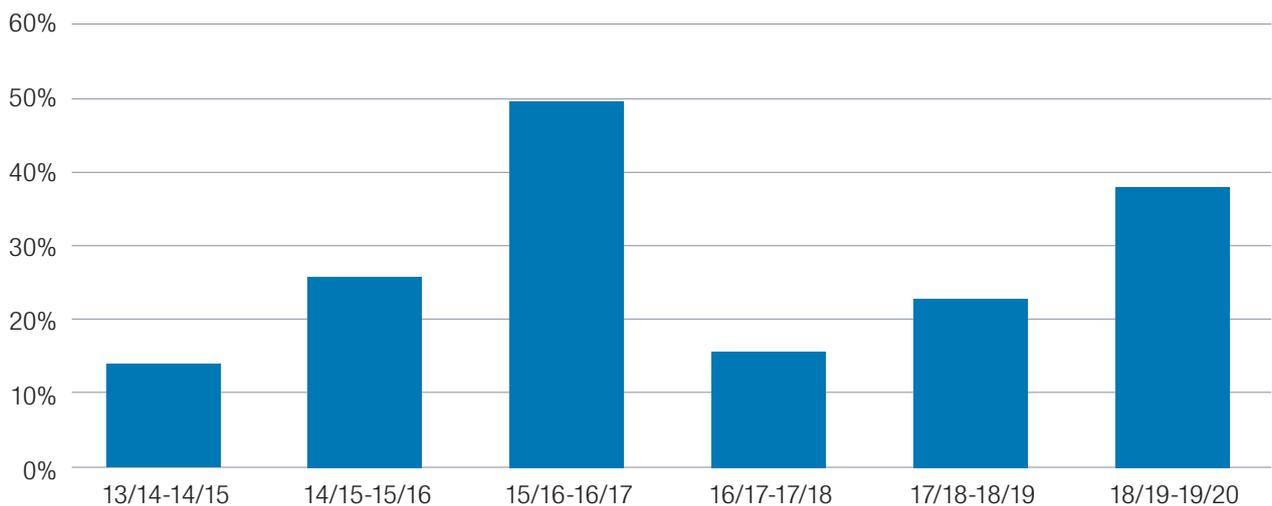
### 3. Senior Phase Vocational Pathway Enrolments 2013-14 to 2019-20

The number of enrolments has increased year on year from 2,101 in 2013/14 to almost 9,000 in 2019/20. The average annual increase in these enrolments is 28%, with an overall percentage increase between 2013/14 and 2019/20 of 320%.

#### Senior Phase Vocational Pathway Enrolments 2013/14-2019/20



#### Year on Year Growth - Senior Phase Vocational Pathway Enrolments

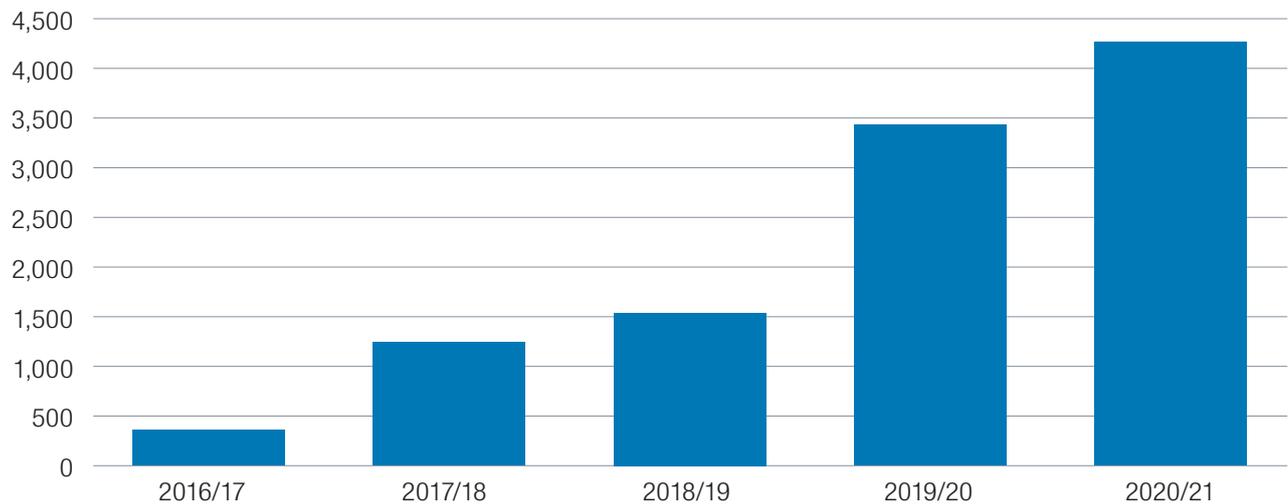


#### 4. Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) Enrolments at SCQF Level 6 2016-17 to 2019-20

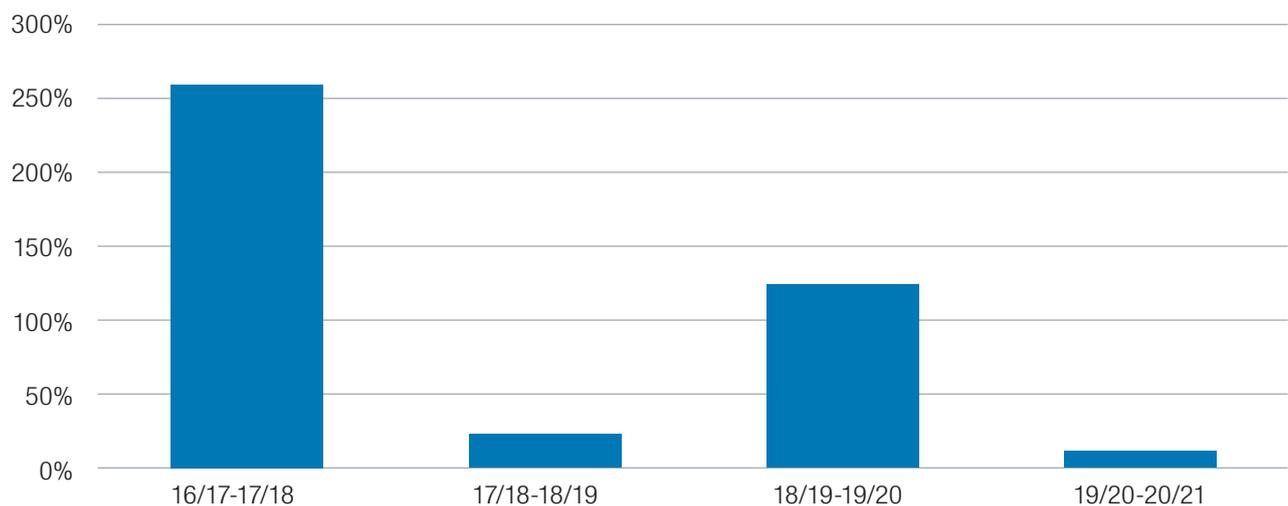
Participation in Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF L6 has seen strong growth since 2016/17 with an increase from 346 participants in 2016/17 to 3,450 in 2019/20, an increase of almost 9 times, with annual growth each year. The number of these enrolments more than doubled between the last two years measured (2018/19 to 2019/20).

From 2019/20, pilot Foundation Apprenticeships were introduced at SCQF Levels 4 and 5. In 2019/20 these numbered 442, giving a total of 3,892 Foundation Apprenticeships. The total number of Foundation Apprenticeship participants for Levels 4,5 and 6 totalled 4,240 in 2020/21.

##### SDS Foundation Apprenticeship Enrolments 2016/17-2019/20



##### Year on Year growth - SDS Foundation Apprenticeships

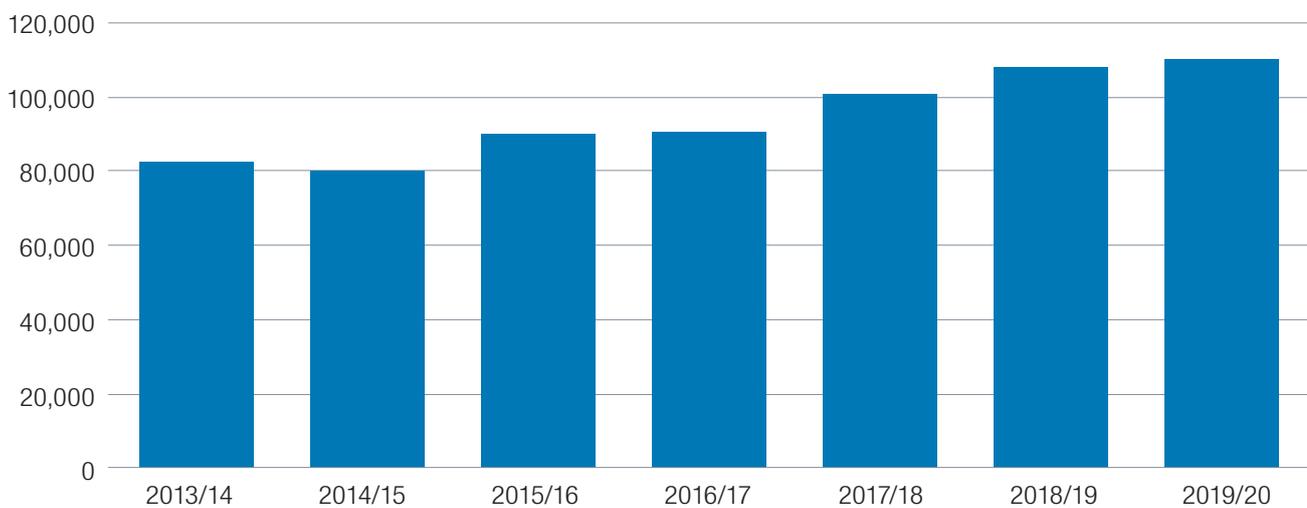


## 5. SFC Funding Credits

### 5a. SFC Funding Credits 2013-14 to 2019-20

In line with the growth in enrolments and students participating in school-college programmes, the volume of SFC funding credits attracted by Scotland's Colleges also increased, from 82,600 credits in 2013/14 to 108,000 in 2018/19 and 110,000 in 2019/20. The percentage increase in funding credits across all measured years is 33.4%, considerably lower than the increases in enrolments (c.70%) and numbers of students (c.60%), indicating that, typically, school college programme enrolments are increasingly attracting fewer funding credits per enrolment.

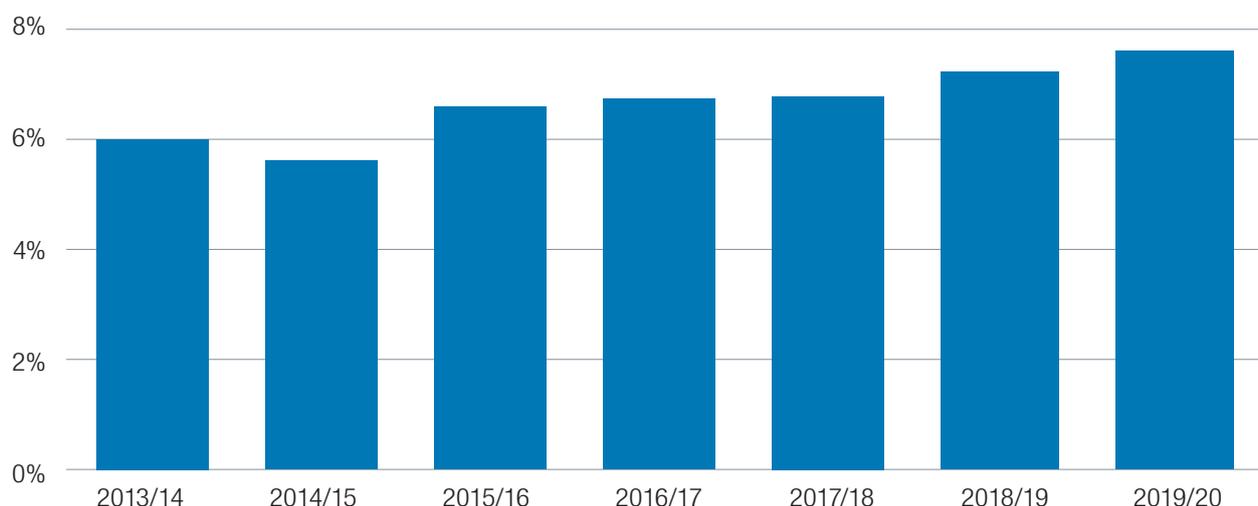
#### SFC Credits - All School/College Activity 2013/14 - 2019/20



### 5b. Secondary School credit activity as a percentage of all FE credits

The percentage of all SFC FE funding credits attributable to secondary school college enrolments have increased from 6% in 2013/14 to 7.6%, again a lower rate of increase than for enrolments, student numbers and non-secondary school participation in school college programmes. Again, this indicates that school-college programmes are attracting fewer funding credits per enrolment.

#### Secondary School Credit Activity as % of All FE Credits 2013/14-2019/20

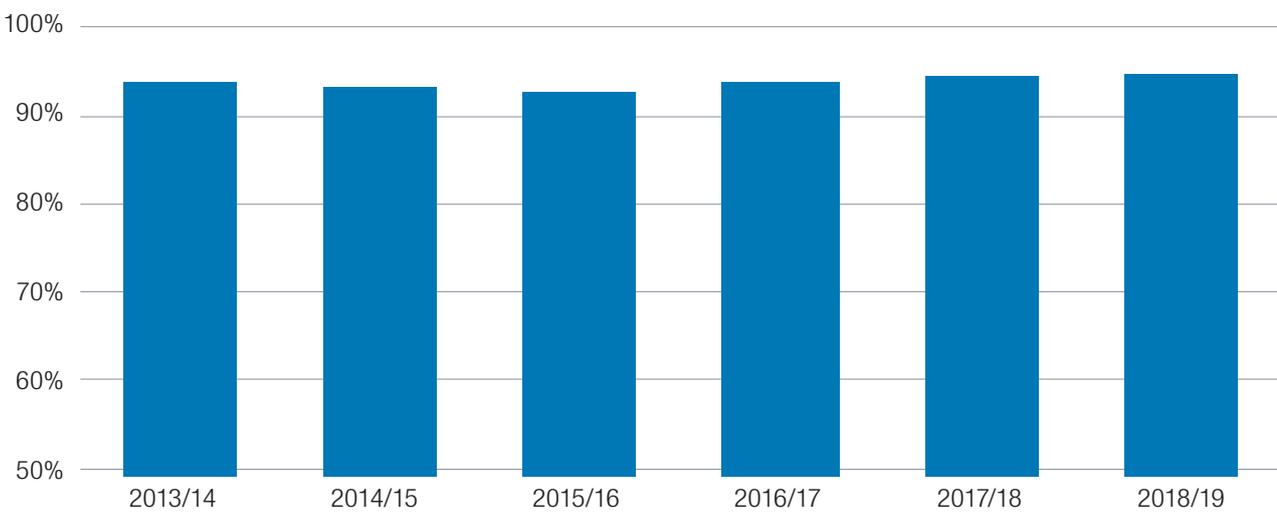


## 6. Completion rates

### 6a. Secondary School Positive Outcome Rate

This figure refers to secondary school pupils who have enrolled on a School-College Partnership course and completed that course, regardless of whether the course included a formal assessment. Where there has been a formal assessment this measure does not indicate whether the pupil has achieved a pass mark, only that they completed the course. We have included this figure as it indicates the high level of completion of School-College Partnership courses and therefore the low drop-out rate for these courses.

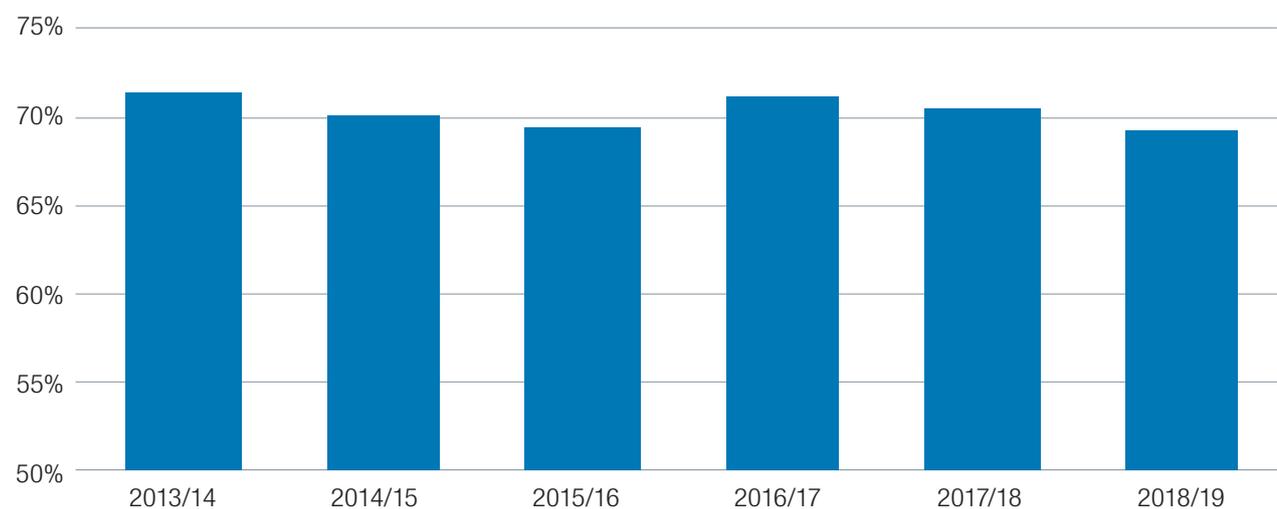
#### Secondary School-College Positive Outcome Rate



### 6b. Secondary School Successful Completion Rate

This figure refers to the pass rate for secondary school pupils who have enrolled on a School-College Partnership Course that includes a formal assessment. It will be seen that the pass-rate has remained broadly consistent over the past six years.

#### Secondary School-College Successful Completion Rate



# SECTION 6: REVIEW OF KEY CHARACTERISTICS AND SUCCESS FACTORS OF SCHOOL-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

To aid the planning and development of School-College Partnerships, it is helpful to define the success factors and characteristics that make them successful. This section highlights the range of School-College Partnerships currently being delivered across the Scottish sector through case studies that have been developed to reflect different points of the learner journey. These case studies provide a snapshot in time of current School-College Partnership delivery and range from Primary School through the Senior Phase and into the world of work.

## Methodology

Whilst the emphasis on School-College Partnerships is with broad general education (BGE) and the Senior Phase, the case studies included reflect the School-College Partnership activity of colleges with Primary Schools and the Scottish Government's emphasis on STEM and how this activity contributes to building learner pathways.

Case studies were also selected to include School-College Partnerships where developing digital skills and competences, work-based learning, using 'big data' and industry as partners are key success factors. Given the current policy priorities and economic context, evidence-based approaches are also included along with a focus on Foundation Apprenticeships and positive destinations.

Selected case studies also align with How Good is our School (HGIOS) and How Good is our College (HGIOC) and, together with reference to Education Scotland Review, provide examples of:

- Best practice collaborative examples by programme.
- Collaborative innovation.
- Successful pedagogy, digital and face to face.
- Managing communication, travel and planning between regional colleges school managers, DYW practitioners and curriculum leads.
- Best practice in DYW partnership and industry networking.
- How School-College Partnerships have actively promoted post-school progression opportunities for school pupils to further, higher and work-based learning options.

Case studies are described in terms of the nature of partnership: who the partners are, the aims and objectives of the School-College Partnership and how and where these are delivered for the benefit of learners. To promote and encourage good practice key success factors of the partnership are identified along with evidence of outcomes and plans for future development. Effective measures taken to limit the impact of the pandemic on the learner experience are also indicated. Finally, the characteristics of successful School-College Partnerships are described.

Information for the case studies was gathered initially through a questionnaire and later via one to one in-depth interviews with stakeholders.

# 1. PARTNERING WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In addressing the long-term workforce needs, the Scottish Government's *Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland*<sup>21</sup> set out plans for the expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC). Recognising that children face a number of transitions throughout their learner journey, effective partnership working to support transitions into, through and out of, ELC is a central element of this vision.

The Action Plan highlighted the need for effective partnership at transition stages, with allied professionals and specialists identified as having valuable contributions to make to smooth transitions. Working across organisational boundaries and putting children and their families at the heart of decision making, is a central feature of *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)*<sup>22</sup>: the Government's national approach that aims to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland.

The Curriculum for Excellence has provided a coherent curriculum from 3-18 years which supports continuity and progression. It has supported a shift in how children are engaged in learning by introducing a broader curriculum, more hands-on learning and play-based opportunities:

➤ **“...school/college partnerships which provide opportunities for young people to develop skills in a relevant and, work related environment.”**

Building the Curriculum 4

Additionally, the *Career Education Standard 3-18 (CES)*<sup>23</sup>, the *Work Placements Standard*<sup>24</sup> and the

21 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2017/10/blueprint-2020-expansion-early-learning-childcare-scotland-quality-action-plan/documents/00526782-pdf/00526782-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00526782.pdf>

22 <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

23 <https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/dyw2-career-education-standard-0915.pdf>

24 [https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW\\_WorkPlacementStandard0915.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW_WorkPlacementStandard0915.pdf)

*Guidance on School/Employer Partnerships*<sup>25</sup> outline the entitlements for learners and the expectations placed on teachers and practitioners, Skills Development Scotland, employers and parents to support all children and young people in their development of skills and understanding of the world of work. Schools are being asked to embed the standards and guidance within learning and teaching across all levels in partnership with stakeholders in order to provide pathways for learners that best support the realisation of young peoples' future aspirations.

Within this context, School-College Partnerships provide a vital mechanism to provide Early Years and Primary School children to learn about the world of work and job possibilities and to draw attention to the strengths and skills needed to take advantage of these opportunities. Nourishing career aspirations and skills in Primary Schools is the focus of the following case study involving a partnership between Edinburgh College and local Primary Schools.

The programme encourages children to think about different careers, especially careers in care. During the course, the pupils heard from Edinburgh College lecturers on topics including the role of men in childcare, working in dental care and the importance and benefits of outdoor learning. Children are enrolled as a college student for 6 days over 6 weeks. The course is a mixture of attending college and working as a member of staff on a placement. A variety of careers within care are included as well as the skills required for many careers. These skills could be used in many other professions, not just care.

All four college campuses host pupils, the particular campus attended is dependent on ease of travel for pupils. Professionals from a variety of other areas of the care sector who are willing to share their experience of working within care are invited to contribute to the programme by giving guest talks.

25 [https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW\\_GuidanceforSchoolEmployerPartnerships0915.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW_GuidanceforSchoolEmployerPartnerships0915.pdf)

## CASE STUDY 1

# Fostering employability in primary schools: Careers in Care with Edinburgh College

### Partners

Edinburgh College partnership with schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians

### Focus

Career aspirations and skills – encouraging children to think about different careers, especially careers in care.

### Success factors

- Raising awareness of jobs/careers
- Links to the Curriculum for Excellence

### Curriculum for Excellence

 “...school/college partnerships which provide opportunities for young people to develop skills in a relevant and, work related environment.”

Building the Curriculum 4

Opportunities to carry out different activities and roles in a variety of settings have enabled me to identify my achievements, skills and areas for development. This will help me to prepare for the next stage in my life and learning (HWB 2-19a)

When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking (LIT 2-02a)

I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions of my own (LIT 2-07a)

- Guest speakers in a variety of roles within the sector
- Addresses gender roles in work
- Reflection: personal and professional
- Mindfulness: useful skills for all careers
- Parental involvement

 “The Careers in Care programme delivered by Edinburgh College has been fantastic for our pupils, it has provided our P6s with an invaluable real-life experience. Not only did the course give our pupils an insight into the care sector, it also helped them to develop many other key skills which will support their future development and ultimately better equip them for life outside of primary school.”

Wallyford Primary School depute headteacher  
Lindsey Barley

 “With the government’s increasing commitment to ensure that all children get the best possible start in life, there has never been a better time to begin developing and inspiring the next generation of care workers. A career in care can be so rewarding and the course aims to educate young people about the career options available to them.”

Edinburgh College lecturer Angie Thomson

 “The Careers in Care course provided a meaningful work and life experience where the children became part of a staff team and had the opportunity to learn about a variety of careers in the sector. This course was engaging, inspiring and rewarding. It was a privilege to work with the students, parents and staff involved.”

Edinburgh College DYW Strategic Lead Deborah Robertson

## Impact

From 2018 the College worked with 3 councils: Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian. Approximately 240 children had this experience.

## Careers in care

Established in 2018, the Careers in Care (CiC) programme addresses the long-term workforce needs of the Scottish Government 2020 Blueprint as well as encouraging role gender equality.

The programme encourages children to think about different careers, especially careers in care. Children are enrolled as a college student for 6 days over 6 weeks. The course is a mixture of attending college and working as a member of staff on a placement. A variety of careers within care are included as well as the skills required for many careers. These skills could be used in many other professions, not just care.

All four college campuses host pupils, the particular campus attended is dependent on ease of travel for pupils. Risk assessing for the children coming to college is of course vital. Red CiC t-shirts are provided to increase visibility. Students have lunch in the canteen and can bring a packed lunch or money for the canteen. The class teacher and lecturer are with the children at all times during their time in college.

Professionals from a variety of other areas of the care sector who are willing to share their experience of working within care are invited to contribute to the programme by giving guest talks.

## Encouraging reflection

Within childcare we encourage reflective thinking on all levels. On the CiC course we encourage the children to think about their experiences each day and give honest feedback. We also start looking at SMART objectives and how we can achieve goals.

## Mindfulness

Following on from reflection we also encourage the children to take time to think about their body and how it responds to feelings such as stress, hunger and anxiety. We do group tasks to show ways we respond to these feelings.

## Parental involvement

We invite the adults from home to join us on day 1 of the course to gain an overview and answer any questions. Each week the children set their own personal challenge to support the development of them thinking as an 'adult'. Adults from home are invited to attend the graduation ceremony where the children showcase their learning and receive their certificate of attendance on the course.



## 2. ADDRESSING THE STEM AGENDA

School-College Partnerships have a vital role to play in addressing the four key challenges for STEM education and training in Scotland identified in the Scottish Government's STEM Strategy third annual report<sup>26</sup> in 2021:

- We need to ensure children, young people and adults are encouraged to develop an interest in, and enthusiasm for, STEM that is reinforced throughout their lives.
- We need to ensure our education system has the right number of practitioners, including teachers with the appropriate STEM capability, delivering excellent learning and teaching.
- We need to ensure that our education and training system is equipping people with the skills that employers need and that it has the flexibility to respond to the changes in labour market demand and the globalised economic context.
- We need to tackle the gender imbalances and other inequities that exist across STEM education and training including in relation to race, disability, deprivation and geography. These are unfair and undermine our ability to deliver inclusive economic growth in Scotland.

The four key aims of the Strategy that were set out four years prior to the publication of the report remain unchanged. These are:

- to build the capacity of the education and training system to deliver excellent STEM learning so that employers have access to the workforce they need;
- to inspire children, young people and adults to

study STEM and to continue their studies to obtain more specialist skills; and

- to close equity gaps in participation and attainment in STEM so that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and contribute to Scotland's economic prosperity;
- to connect the STEM education and training offer with labour market need – both now and in the future – to support improved productivity and inclusive economic growth.

New College Lanarkshire (NCL) has linked with SDS and its partner local authorities to introduce an innovative collaboration to promote and inspire STEM in their local nursery schools. As a core part of the Curriculum for Excellence, the Scottish Government's strategy for STEM aims to help create a strong pipeline of STEM talent into the labour market and ensure that all learners develop STEM skills and knowledge. This will be achieved by:

- Creating positive STEM role models, mentors and coaches.
- Promoting the opportunities and benefits of STEM learning and careers.

The case study below provides an example of a School-College Partnership that addresses these strategic objectives by harnessing the skills of Early Years students as college ambassadors for STEM.

Inspired by the challenge to address STEM education and training in the Early Years curriculum, staff at New College Lanarkshire (NCL) came up with an innovative practice to utilise what they describe as their 'best resource': their students. In a pilot programme involving three college campuses students engaged in SCQF level 6 and SWAP Early Learning and Childcare courses to deliver a

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/stem-strategy-education-training-scotland-third-annual-report/>

'STEM in Early Years' unit in local nursery schools. Successful completion of the level 6 course may allow progression to an HNC in Childhood Practice which in turn can allow articulation to university degrees in associated discipline areas.

The pilot scheme was funded by Education Scotland through their Enhancing Professional Learning in STEM programme. Students gain credit for the unit while nursery school pupils and their families gain knowledge of STEM. The unit promotes knowledge and understanding of STEM to its Early Years practitioners, who in turn deliver planned STEM lesson activities to nursery and lower-level primary pupils aligned with CfE key aims. The inspired 'step into STEM bag' forms part of the curriculum whereby nursery pupils are encouraged to take STEM related objects home for discussion with their parents or carers, providing a vital connection

in respect of the need to ensure children, young people and adults are encouraged to develop an interest in, and enthusiasm for, STEM that is reinforced throughout their lives (STEM Strategy for Education and Training, 2020-21).

The NCL scheme inspires children as young as 3 years old to engage with STEM with the aim of closing equity gaps in participation and attainment in STEM, so that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and connects the STEM education and training offer with labour market need to support improved productivity and inclusive economic growth (STEM Strategy for Education and Training, 2020-21).

By utilising students to deliver STEM provision in the Early Years this model is able to be sustained.



## CASE STUDY 2

# Building STEM Capital in the Early Years: New College Lanarkshire

### Partners

New College Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Developing the Young Workforce.

### Focus

A partnership approach which utilises students as ambassadors to promote and inspire interest in STEM in nursery pupils and their families.

### Success factors

- Regional STEM Partnership supporting STEM in Early Years across the education pipeline
- Inspiring STEM in the early years' curriculum
- Creating a pipeline for STEM talent in the workforce
- Early Years students as college ambassadors for STEM

- Addressing STEM poverty / Improving Science Capital
- Tackling gender imbalances in STEM By introducing and raising awareness of STEM careers to 3 years plus, removing barriers of typical gender assigned roles (Scottish Government Strategy for Gender Equality)
- Connecting with families
- Sustainable, ambition to roll out nationally

➤ **“Our aim is to create opportunities for anyone in the education sector to become involved and to know that they have a resource in the Lanarkshire region they can turn to. Our ambition in Lanarkshire is to introduce STEM at as early an age as possible, to expose learners of all ages to STEM activities and create a STEM mind-set throughout the education pipeline.”**

Clare Flynn, Head of Faculty of Care and Science



## Impact



**“We need to ensure that we build on every generation’s ‘Science Capital’, from the youngest learner to the eldest, to ensure that in Lanarkshire we bridge the gap in the STEM labour market.”**

Derek Steven, Curriculum and Quality Leader for Science

Approximately 60 students in this pilot stage at SCQF Level 6 over 3 campuses are involved.

## Moving forward:

- Local roll out and ambitions for a national roll out
- Influencing course design at SCQF Levels 4 and 5 with Introduction to STEM in Early Years aligned with outdoor learning and Forest Schools initiative.
- Professional Learning opportunities for staff across the pipeline supported by Regional STEM Partnership



### 3. DEVELOPING DIGITAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Developing the skills base and maximising the potential for capitalising on opportunities is key to supporting inclusive growth aspirations in Scotland's rural areas (*Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland: 2019–2021*<sup>27</sup>).

The development process led to the identification and agreement of five overarching priority areas for action that can be progressed in the context of this skills action plan: Underpinning each of these priority areas needs to be a consideration of equalities:

- Priority area A: Better understand the skills rural employers need and align provision to support this;
- Priority area B: Provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision to secure, sustain and progress in their careers in rural areas;
- Priority area C: Develop the current workforce in rural areas through upskilling and reskilling;
- Priority area D: Build a secure pipeline for the future;
- Priority area E: Take a co-ordinated, strategic approach to tackling skills in rural areas.

The Learner Journey Review also emphasises the need to provide real choice for all learners including those from rural areas by committing to:

➤ **'Broadening our approach to education and reframing our offer, doing more for those who get the least out of the system and ensuring all young people access the high-level work-based skills Scotland's economy needs.'**

Keeping the interest of current and future students at the heart of everything we do and supporting the digital revolution for learners were two themes identified by the Scottish Funding Council's *Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Scotland's Colleges and Universities Phase One Report*<sup>28</sup> in October 2020.

School-College Partnerships are uniquely placed to address the challenge of providing equitable access to provision for learners in rural areas. To be successful, however, School-College Partnerships need to be sustainable over time. One such example is evidenced by the Highland Virtual School.

This highly innovative tri-partnership initiative was established to provide learners in rural and remote areas with online access to a wider curriculum than was on offer locally. In the past geography and lengthy travel times have been barriers to attending college for learners in these areas.

27 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/45683/skills-action-plan-for-rural-scotland-summary-report.pdf>

28 [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications\\_sfccp052020/Review\\_of\\_Coherent\\_Provision\\_and\\_Sustainability\\_Phase\\_1\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications_sfccp052020/Review_of_Coherent_Provision_and_Sustainability_Phase_1_Report.pdf)

Led by the colleges with the Local Authority, the partnership engages 29 secondary schools across Highland Region to develop the Virtual School (VS). The VS now delivers 21 qualifications to pupils based anywhere in the Highlands in a range of SCQF levels 5-7 subjects including apprenticeships involving remote work placements.

Courses are timetabled to correspond with schools' column choice timetables. All courses are taught by lecturers in virtual attendance during timetabled slots via online learning environments such as Google Hangout or Brightspace.

Seven years ago, within secondary schools there was a steady decline in the subject "Computing" and pupils had limited or no options. West Highland College UHI scoped out and built up a pipeline of curriculum for Senior Phase through Highland Virtual

School. Today, Nat 5, higher and advanced higher levels enable school pupils to access and engage with Computing and Digital Media whilst at school and can progress on to post-school options HNC, HND and degree. The successes of this particular SCP therefore include the focus on providing an accessible computing curriculum where pupils have an expanded choice of subjects. Additionally, the Virtual School's successful digital pedagogy, by its very nature, develops learners' intrinsic digital skills.

The VS provides an accessible and inclusive curriculum designed for remote delivery, which seamlessly continued when the country went into lockdown in March 2020. The model could be replicated elsewhere and has the added benefit of a net zero impact on carbon emissions in terms of climate change.



## CASE STUDY 3

# Addressing the equity gap for learners in rural areas: Virtual School Highlands

### Partners

West Highland College UHI, Inverness College UHI, North Highland College UHI, Highland Council, Balfour Beatie, Sightkit Solutions and 29 secondary schools

### Focus

Providing learners in rural and remote areas with online access to a wider curriculum than was on offer locally.

### Highland Virtual School

This highly innovative tri-partnership initiative was established to provide learners in rural and remote areas with online access to a wider curriculum than was on offer locally. In the past geography and lengthy travel times have been barriers to attending college for learners in these areas.

Led by the colleges with the Local Authority, the partnership engages 29 secondary schools across Highland Region to develop the *Virtual School*<sup>9</sup> (VS). The VS now delivers 20 qualifications to pupils based anywhere in the Highlands in a range of SCQF levels 5-7 subjects including apprenticeships involving remote work placements.



The VS provides an accessible and inclusive curriculum designed for remote delivery, which seamlessly continued when the country went into lockdown in March 2020.

Seven years ago, within secondary schools there was a steady decline in the subject “Computing” and pupils had limited or no option. West Highland College UHI scoped out and built up a pipeline of curriculum for Senior Phase through Highland Virtual School. Today, Nat 5, higher and advanced higher levels enable school pupils to access and engage with Computing and Digital Media whilst at school and can progress on to post-school options HNC, HND and degree.

### Success factors

- Helping to address the equity gap in rural/urban education landscape
- Providing an accessible curriculum
- Providing a computing curriculum
- Expanding choice for pupils
- Successful digital pedagogy
- Building learner networks
- Intrinsic digital skills acquisition
- Inclusive
- Sustainable

➤ **“I think the Virtual School is a really positive way to learn. It gives people that added flexibility not only in their vocations and where they are based but it also brings people together from disparate areas from across the Highlands, so it has that sociable aspect too. Virtual School allows people to develop skills in areas such as digital technology and flexible learning which is becoming more common place in the world of work.”**

Ben Williams, Lecturer, Business

➤ **95% of pupils indicate that: “I am confident that I have the digital skills required for my studies this year”.**

➤ **“I think the course is taught well, with a variety of activities including podcasts and videos which help engage me with the subject.”**

Virtual School pupil, 2021

### Benefits to learners

Feedback collected via annual student feedback surveys indicate provide evidence that learners benefit from:

- Accessing a subject of their choice that they would not otherwise be able to study until leaving school
- Gaining a qualification relevant to their chosen career
- By learning and working with others online, learners become digitally competent and confident whilst enhancing their meta-skills and work readiness
- Feeling better prepared for further study and working online
- Learning with like-minded pupils from elsewhere
- Experience cultural differences by learning with pupils from all over the Highlands
- Foundation Apprentices are immersed in work experience with national and international companies, equipping them with a solid knowledge of the industry from where they live
- Virtual experts and visits including a conference in Las Vegas

A clear benefit from the perspective of VS subject expert teachers is that they have the flexibility to be based from where they enjoy living.

### Impact

- In 2019-20, 350+ pupils benefited from VS with positive outcomes. Most pupils progress into college programmes, retaining more young people in the Highlands.



**West Highland College UHI, North Highland College UHI and Inverness College UHI's Virtual**



**School model is a perfect example of collaboration and cooperation between FE providers in the Scottish Highlands, using technology to engage and empower learners remotely.”**

Bob Harrison, Tes FE Awards 2021 lead judge

- VS is not just accessible; it is also inclusive. The model provides small rural schools and home educated pupils with a greater choice of qualifications. Pupils with school issues (illness, bullying etc) continue with high attendance in VS. The VS also contributes towards reduction in carbon emissions and wellbeing (zero travel-time).

During the pandemic VS pupils have continued to enjoy a high-quality learning experience in their online-classrooms and successfully achieved their qualifications without deferrals. Indeed, lockdown has highlighted the strengths, areas for development, scalability, and the relevance of an effective future-proof model of learning that delivers successful outcomes.

### Plans for development



The three colleges will continue to work with schools and the local authority to explore options for expanding subject choice and to improve access to timetables. The colleges are keen to extend the virtual offer, particularly to reach out to home schooled children and interrupted learners and would welcome expressions of interest from other areas. Virtual School is a very portable model. For more information, please contact [info.whc@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:info.whc@uhi.ac.uk)

## 4. GAINING INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Developing digital skills is also very much evident in the following case study where Moray College have partnered with the local authority, DYW, local employers and eight schools in Moray to help learners gain insight into the world of work together with an industry recognised qualification while they are still at school.

As part of the Government's response to the pandemic the *Growing the Young Person's Guarantee*<sup>30</sup> initiative pledges to help young people at this critical time including:

- Create work-based learning, training and upskilling opportunities for young people

Pupils attend college one day per week for up to 2 years over their S5 & S6 years to develop industry knowledge through real work experience with an employer. A fast track one year route to the qualification can be negotiated between the learner and their school to allow them to achieve the qualification quicker.

The experience allows learners to test out a given job role in a real life setting thus enhancing their respective CVs, personal statements and career planning.

Apprentices work on industry projects that deliver the relevant knowledge and skills identified by employers. Courses include National Progression Award (NPA) units: an industry recognised qualification which is taught within a classroom environment.

They are assessed on the work-based learning they do whilst gaining an industry recognised qualification at SCQF level 6. This signals the importance of the programme in providing a comparable vocational pathway for pupils at a level consistent with a Scottish Higher.

Local employers stepped up during the pandemic to provide fantastic support for the programme. Out of the Darkness Theatre Company<sup>31</sup> have been the teaching staff for the 1st year cohort provide while providing work experience for pupils who were unable to attend employer placements.

30 <https://www.gov.scot/news/growing-the-young-persons-guarantee/>

31 <https://odtheatre.org.uk/>

## CASE STUDY 4

# Gaining Industry Insight: Foundation Apprenticeship in Creative & Digital Media at Moray College

### Partners

Moray College UHI, Moray Council, Developing the Young Workforce, local employers, eight schools in Moray

### Focus

Learners gain insight into the world of work together with an industry recognised qualification while they are still at school

### Success factors:

- DYW partnership and industry networking
- Learners accessing the world of work
- Gaining industry insight
- Testing out a given job role in a real-life setting
- Delivering industry relevant knowledge and skills
- Developing confidence and communication skills
- An industry recognised qualification



“Working with the students on this Foundation Apprenticeship has been both challenging and humbling. The pupils have been on a journey, developing their creative skills within the safety of Out of the Darkness Theatre Company. It has been a pleasure working with both the pupils and the staff. The presentation at the end of year one was so powerful that I cried.”

Gillian Ballantyne, Foundation Apprenticeship Co-Ordinator



➤ “The Foundation Apprenticeship in Creative and Digital Media has been delivered as a joint venture between Out of the Darkness Theatre Company and Moray College UHI. The pupils spend their first year in the Theatre Company and have had an incredible insight and opportunity to develop skills which will support them in their future career pathways. Moving into second year, the pupils will utilise the skills that they have learned to bring a fresh and exciting perspective to a variety of companies throughout Moray.”

Garry Rendall, Head of Curriculum  
Creative & Digital Media

➤ “Foundation Apprenticeships support young people gain the skills and knowledge that make them stand out from the crowd. If they are completing college or UCAS applications or preparing their CVs, then everything they have done in a Foundation Apprenticeship is relevant and will stand them in good stead moving forward.”

Jackie Andrews, Head of Business Skills,  
Foundation Apprenticeship

### Work based learning

The exceptionally high standard of work produced on the apprenticeships is evidenced in the media project completed by Year 1 pupils.

Foundation apprentice Ciaran Hawley (Year 2, Creative & Digital Media) explains the benefits of the experience for him:

➤ ‘I have enjoyed being able to work on different media projects including the ODTC animal farm website. There have been many things that have gone well, like working on the website as the entire group was able to coordinate times to work on each page. I have also learned new ways to make short films and work with others to create group projects’.

Several of our graduate C&DM FAs are now studying associated subjects in Moray and beyond with a view to continuing in this field. The benefit of the FA is that it allows students to develop a wide range of skills enabling them to make informed choices for their future.

Freya Daggert (Year 1, Creative and Digital Media) produced the impactful summary below of her foundation apprentice experience.



## 5. MANAGING CAREERS USING BIG DATA AND SKILLS PROFILING

School-College Partnerships can play a vital role in promoting career planning for young people as the following case studies demonstrate. The Scottish Government's Careers Strategy<sup>32</sup> highlights the role that career education, information, advice and guidance (CIAG) services in Scotland can play in helping to address future skills demands and deliver inclusive growth.

Data sharing among partners is critical and forms a key pillar around the Opportunities for All<sup>33</sup> policy agenda, which promises to offer training or education to every 16 to 19-year-old in Scotland as they move towards employment.

By sharing information among key partners Skills Development Scotland (SDS) want to provide tailored support to young people when they leave school, specifically those who are not moving on to learning or work. The aim is to provide learners with a safety net, no matter where they are or end up, and to reduce youth unemployment at the same time.

SDS is doing this through the 16+ Data Hub, which is linking up the work going on across Scotland to help our young people find positive, sustained destinations after their secondary school education. An example of this partnership at work involves New College Lanarkshire and Skills Development Scotland linking to use the 16+ Data Hub in the college's strategic planning to identify students who have:

- Not stated a career preference (so perhaps not had enough guidance)
- Stated a career preference different to the current course studied (so why is the student on this course?)
- Stated a route other than FE as a preference (so how are they getting on in college?)

- Stated a range of different (sometimes very different) career routes where further advice and discussion could help
- Are on track in relation to stated early preferences from school and require relevant discussion to keep on track

Additionally, using the Data Hub in this way will identify any correlation/causation between career preferences and those learners who have withdrawn.

The new tool entitled "Progress Review Portal" helps to improve guidance support for all full-time non-advanced as well as most full-time advanced programmes.

The Portal holds a profile of each student including a photograph, key details, the course of study, the various modules of the course and attendance.

Through the use of the Scottish Candidate Number to support robust data matching, information is automatically extracted from the 16+ Data Hub College Report including the Local Authority and Skills Development Scotland Preferred Routes and Preferred Occupations, which populates the Progress Review Portal.

The impact of this new Portal and the ongoing focus on student support has had a positive impact across the College. It has enabled the College to move away from paper-based systems and processes to one where systems are aligned and integrated, improving the experience for both students and staff.

In summary, the dovetailing of career information, which was shared at school, and has been transposed and documented within New College Lanarkshire's guidance system for each student enables a more informed discussion to take place with up-to-date information. The College is utilising the 16+ Data Hub to support a continuous and connected learner journey for students.

32 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-careers-strategy-moving-forward-fairer-scotland-duty/>

33 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/opportunities-supporting-young-people-participate-post-16-learning-training-work/>

## CASE STUDY 5

# Partnering for better use of data to support learners, New College Lanarkshire



### Partners

New College Lanarkshire and Skills Development Scotland

### Focus

New College Lanarkshire and Skills Development Scotland's Data Sharing Team have worked together to better utilise the information that is available through the 16+ Data Hub to provide tailored support to young people when they leave school, specifically those who are not moving on to learning or work.

### Success factors

- The information gives partners a better understanding of the intended and actual destination of young people after they leave school. It enables front line staff in the college to be better placed to provide support for young people who are not in training, learning or work and are at risk of disengagement. Information sharing is about ensuring young people reach their full potential.
- Effective information sharing between partners allows them to quickly identify and engage with a young person who has not secured a positive destination after school, has failed to complete a course of learning/training or has not started working.

- It is about helping and supporting learners to make a positive transition from school to the wider world of education, training and employment. Information sharing gives partners the confidence that each young person has received the most appropriate support for them.
- Learners have a record to evidence their skills and competences.

The Learner Plan Portal used across all full-time courses has been designed around the Post 16 Data Hub. Students and Lecturing staff engage with software that links career preference information gathered at school. Dr Robert Allan, Assistant Head of Faculty, stated, “the portal is a terrific development that allows the college to support student transitions. It is a stride towards our efforts to meet the key recommendations of the Learner Journey review and its priorities of integration, information and alignment”.

“Students have greatly appreciated one to one support in college that builds in preferences they have taken time to highlight within secondary school and which can be reflected upon and updated in college. The 1<sup>st</sup> year of the portal's use has improved career management skills, better engagement with My World of Work as well as critical and timely intervention to support career decisions and pathways”.



## 6. ENGAGING LEARNERS IN THEIR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND PROFILING

School-College Partnerships have a role to play in enhancing the learner journey, especially around key transitions to college, university and work, which is the focus for the following case study involving Dundee and Angus College, Baldrigon Academy, Skills Development Scotland, local authority schools and employers.

Embedding meta skills into everyday learning as part of the learner journey is the focus of this innovative local authority wide School-College Partnership. This is in recognition that the idea of ‘a job for life’ is essentially a thing of the past, and that the education system must prepare young people to continuously develop new skills and embrace lifelong learning. The partnership involves two key strands:

- Student engagement in their skills development and profiling throughout the learner journey
- Supporting staff in their continuous professional development towards a better awareness and understanding of meta skills to enhance learning and teaching

A pilot project, involving Baldrigon Academy and cluster primary teaching staff and employers, aimed to enable young people to identify and develop their meta-skills such as adapting, creativity and initiative so that learners are fully equipped to be able to enter and succeed in the changing world of work.

The pilot evolved from evidence from school staff that many pupils lacked an appreciation of their skills or confidence to identify progress made in activities both in and out of school. Teachers recognised the opportunity to highlight and embed meta-skills into learning and teaching practice and wanted to develop a better, shared understanding of what meta skills are.

Involving local employers in the pilot ensured the skills identified were industry relevant. The goal was to embed these skills within the curriculum to improve learner engagement and to enhance the learner journey, especially around key transitions to college, university or work.

Part of the innovation involved harnessing the My World of Work (MyWoW)<sup>34</sup> platform (available to young people in Scottish secondary schools) to allow pupils to record and be able to track and plan their skills throughout their learner journey. For example, learners on Foundation Apprenticeships can capture and build their meta-skills evidence in their My World of Work account, alongside their technical skills, whether in school, at college or on work placement. The profile can form the basis of a personal statement at any given time that can be used for college, university, or job applications.

The approach of this innovative partnership is directly in line with Education Scotland’s Guidance for Teachers and Practitioners ‘Supporting young people in profiling their skills and achievements’ and supports key national strategies including the DYW Career Education Standard.

## CASE STUDY 6

# Skills profiling from primary school, throughout secondary school, into college and beyond in Dundee

### Partners

Dundee and Angus College, Baldrigon Academy, Skills Development Scotland, local authority schools and employers

### Focus

Embedding meta skills into everyday learning as part of the learner journey

### Success factors:

- Industry involvement
- Meta skills awareness and shared understanding
- Embedding skills in the curriculum
- Student skills profiling
- Skills ambassadors
- Learner journey approach

➤ **“The Education Team is committed to developing innovative exemplar approaches with strategic partners to widen opportunities for more young people to benefit from a seamless learner journey approach to skills profiling.”**

George Junor, SDS Education Manager (Partnership)

➤ **“Dundee and Angus College strives to embed meta skills awareness, development and enhancement as part of every learner’s educational journey. We are delighted to be working with our colleagues in both primary and secondary schools along with SDS to provide that joined approach to skills development within the region”**

Kirsty Paterson, Head of Sector  
– Business, Access and Education

### Challenges

- Pupils lacking awareness and confidence to identify skills
- Teacher knowledge of skills and transferability
- Relating skills to life beyond the classroom
- Consistency of skills understanding

### The pilot

- Pilot with S3 year group, cluster primaries and selected college student groups in AY 19-20
- Joint CPD with teaching staff in secondary school, college lecturers and employers
- Skills champions in secondary school to help support primary colleagues
- Scale model across city

### Engaging students, supporting staff

Embedding meta skills into everyday learning as part of the learner journey is the focus of this innovative local authority wide School-College Partnership. This is in recognition that the idea of ‘a job for life’ is essentially a thing of the past, and that the education system must prepare young people to continuously develop new skills and embrace lifelong learning. The partnership involves two key strands:

- Student engagement in their skills development and profiling throughout the learner journey
- Supporting staff in their continuous professional development towards a better awareness and understanding of meta skills to enhance learning and teaching

A pilot project, involving Baldragon Academy and cluster primary teaching staff and employers, aimed to enable young people to identify and develop their meta-skills such as *adapting*, *creativity* and *initiative* so that learners are fully equipped to be able to enter and succeed in the changing world of work.

The pilot evolved from evidence from school staff that many pupils lacked an appreciation of their skills or confidence to identify progress made in activities both in and out of school. Teachers recognised the opportunity to highlight and embed meta-skills into learning and teaching practice and wanted to develop a better, shared understanding of what meta skills are.

Involving local employers in the pilot ensured the skills identified were industry relevant. The goal was to embed these skills within the curriculum to improve learner engagement and to enhance the learner journey, especially around key transitions to college, university or work.

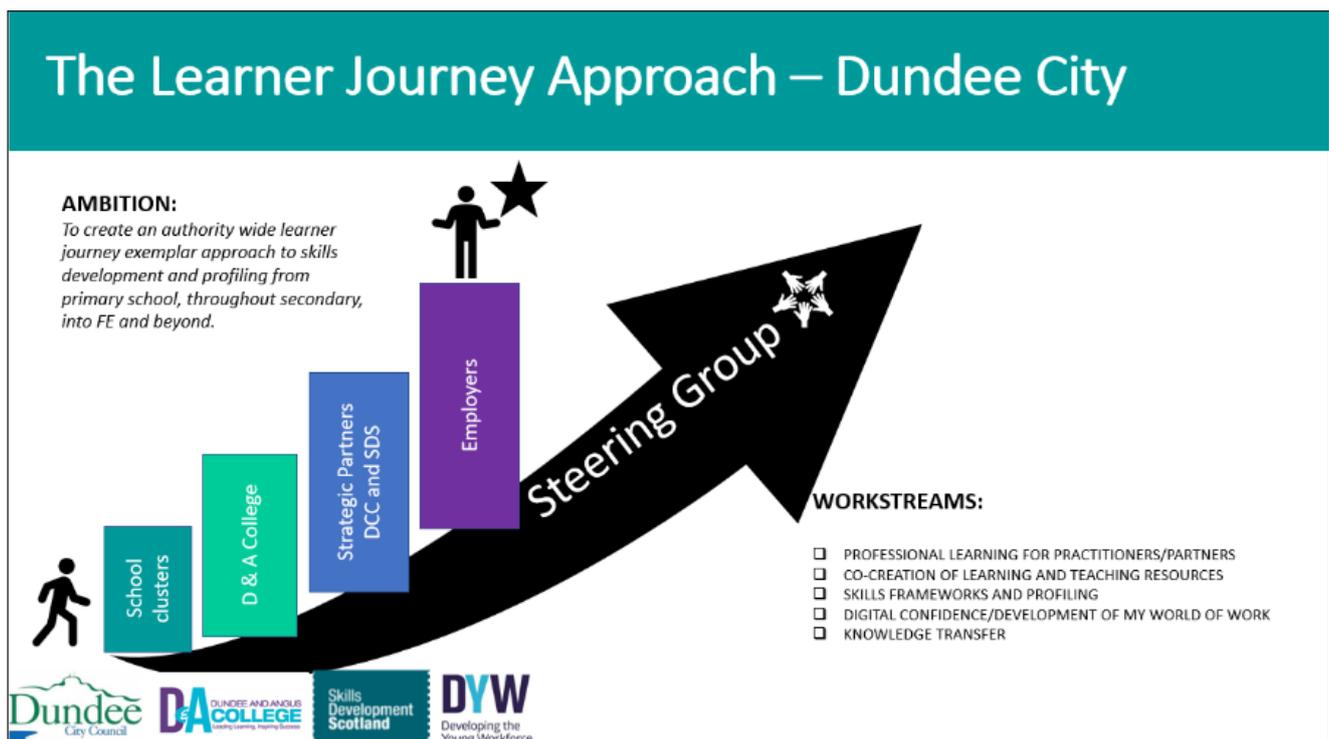
Part of the innovation involved harnessing the My World of Work (MyWoW)<sup>35</sup> platform (available to young people in Scottish secondary schools) to allow pupils to record and be able to track and plan their skills throughout their learner journey. For example, learners on Foundation Apprenticeships can capture and build their meta-skills evidence in their My World of Work account, alongside their technical skills, whether in school, at college or on work placement. The profile can form the basis of a personal statement at any given time that can be used for college, university, or job applications.

The approach of this innovative partnership is directly in line with Education Scotland's Guidance for Teachers and Practitioners '*Supporting young people in profiling their skills and achievements*' and supports key national strategies including the *DYW Career Education Standard*.

### Moving forward

The experiences of the staff and learners involved will be evaluated and will inform the further roll out of the pilot across the local authority and beyond.

35 [www.myworldofwork.co.uk](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk)



## 7. WORK-BASED LEARNING IN FOCUS

Partnering with industry to provide learners with work-based learning opportunities has long been a focus of School-College Partnerships. The benefits of such a partnership were very much in evidence when, during the pandemic, Senior Phase pupils were enabled to continue with employer placement activity during restricted access to the workplace.

As the following case study outlines, North East Scotland College (NESCol) linked with Balfour Beattie to deliver the work-based element of the Foundation Apprenticeship in Civil Engineering as a virtual experience. Balfour Beattie have delivered structured sessions and associated activities utilising a bespoke online portal to help students to put their learning into context and to raise awareness of career opportunities in the construction industry.

On a monthly basis, the team at Balfour Beattie run a virtual session with the students, introducing them to key projects and activities that they are working on. This has included the Union Terrace Gardens project, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) and the Cairngorm Funicular Station.

At the end of the session, the students are set an assignment, related to the elements discussed. This may include asking them to consider how the company has approached elements of the project and the reasons behind this or asking them to make suggestions about how best to approach a problem or challenge in the workplace.

Students then work in small groups to research and present their findings back to Balfour Beattie using the online portal that has been developed for this purpose. Different Balfour Beattie employees are invited to join each session to share their experiences with the students and to answer any questions that they have about the projects, company or general industry.

The sessions are facilitated and recorded by the NESCol lecturer, with recordings uploaded to both the portal and NESCol Blackboard, to allow students to review lessons as needed. The lecturer provides support to the students as they work on the assignment element of the project and helps them to identify evidence to support their achievement of the customised award unit.

Students gain valuable evidence towards their customised unit award, evidencing how they communicate with others, collaborate and manage interactions effectively, as well as introducing them to ethics in business and contractual issues.

NESCol colleagues also have a programme of knowledge exchange activities with individual schools, where each year professional dialogue sessions are facilitated between school and college practitioners, focusing on subject specialist topics and themes.

## CASE STUDY 7

# Employer led virtual work-based learning with Balfour Beattie and NESCol

### Partners

North East College, Scotland, Balfour Beattie, Skills Development Scotland, schools

### Focus

Civil Engineering Foundation Apprenticeship

### Success factors

- School, College, Industry partnership enabling Senior Phase pupils to continue with employer placement activity during restricted access to the workplace
- Employer-delivered work-based learning utilising a bespoke online portal to help students to put their learning into context and to raise awareness of career opportunities in the construction industry
- The format for accessing learning directly with the college and the employer has been shared with secondary schools delivering Foundation Apprenticeships and has contributed to a better understanding of how blended learning activities can be delivered
- Students gain insight into possible career paths in engineering and can ask questions about what it's really like to work in the industry
- Students are getting the opportunity to interact with professionals, and it encourages them to engage and present themselves in a professional manner

 **“We are delighted to be partnering with such a forward-thinking business which has invested significant time and consideration into ensuring that our students gain exposure to the world of work and all the benefits that this brings.”**

Neil Campbell, NESCol

 **“We conduct learner reviews twice a year across the whole portfolio of school college provision. For Foundation Apprentices, learner reviews are completed once a quarter, and we are working towards ensuring the more detailed information is shared with school contacts.”**

Duncan Abernethy, Director of Business Development, NESCol

### Impact

Balfour Beatty have gone over and above to ensure that students are able to have a meaningful experience in terms of remote employer engagement. The examples of real-life projects have helped contextualise much of the classroom learning and the students have been enthusiastic about the opportunity with a 100% attendance at each session.

### Moving forward

In non-Covid-19 times, there would have been celebration of success events, inviting Head Teachers, parents/ carers, FA learners and employers and learning providers to a session where everyone can meet to commemorate the achievements and showcase activities undertaken.

The partnership activity between schools, NESCol and the employer has embraced an innovative approach to virtual learning, enabling Senior Phase pupils to continue with employer placement activity during restricted access to the workplace.

## 8. PROMOTING POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

School-College Partnerships are at the forefront of promoting post-school pathways into college, university and work. Providing learners with the opportunity to explore potential post-school pathways during the Senior Phase is at the heart of the following innovative, award winning approach involving a partnership between Forth Valley College and two local authorities.

The case study below describes the Schools College Opportunities to Succeed (SCOTS) programme which provides S4 pupils who are studying at SCQF Level 3 and are at risk of not sustaining a positive destination with an opportunity to explore progression pathways at college. The programme aims to help them make informed decisions about their post-school options by giving them an opportunity to try a range of different vocational subject areas as well as introducing them to the college environment.

The course offers a structured three-week taster experience in eight different vocational areas over the academic year. Where pupils then apply to college, the programme also enables easier transition by streamlining the progression route.

The link between the College and participating schools has also been a significant factor in the success of the programme. From the outset, pupils are jointly interviewed for the programme by school and college staff. The college team and a designated member of staff from each school then work together to support learners, sustain attendance and ensure proactive reporting and monitoring.

School and council staff are also able to attend the college classes at any time and there are ongoing planning meetings and joint CPD opportunities.



## CASE STUDY 8

# Exploring progression pathways with SCOTS at Forth Valley College

### Partners

Forth Valley College and Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils, Schools

### Focus

The Schools College Opportunities to Success (SCOTS) programme provides S4 pupils who are at risk of not sustaining a positive destination with an opportunity to explore progression pathways at college.

Pupils on the programme attend college one afternoon per week and experience eight different

subjects: construction, hair and beauty, engineering, business administration and tourism, care, fitness, health and exercise, creative industries and science. They also work towards the Falkirk Employability Award throughout the course.

Within their schools, the young people involved also work with teachers to improve their skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. They also develop employability skills such as researching for jobs, creating a CV, preparing for interviews and also learning more about the “taster” subjects they were undertaking within Forth Valley College.

Mitchell Brown (pictured here with his trophy at the FVC Stirling Campus) from Bannockburn High School, who won the Stirling SCOTS Student of the Year Award in 2019, said: “I have to say I am proud of myself for winning the SCOTS Student of the Year award. My favourite part of the course was the Sound Production and the Creative Industries subjects, and it has allowed me to focus on what I would like to do once leaving school. I would also recommend the SCOTS programme to other school pupils.”

Also, in the photo are (from left to right back row) Ernie Romer, FVC’s School Provision Coordinator, Fiona Brown, FVC’s former Vice Principal Learning and Teaching, Kevin Kelman, former Chief Education Officer at Stirling Council and FVC Principal Dr Ken Thomson OBE.



### Success factors

- The college and participating schools link to jointly interview students for the programme
- The college team and a designated member of staff from each school then work together to support learners, sustain attendance and ensure proactive reporting and monitoring
- Enables easier transition by streamlining the progression route

➤ **“We’re absolutely delighted with the impact the SCOTS programme is having on the lives of young people in the local area. The figures speak for themselves in regard to the success of the programme. The innovative model helps pupils to explore a wide range of potential career paths, especially ones they may never have considered. It opens their eyes to the opportunities out there and helps them make an informed decision about their futures. The programme is also an excellent example of how we have worked closely with partners to create a solution which overcomes barriers to learning and which will contribute to a sustainable long-term workforce within the local area and beyond.”**

Dr Ken Thomson OBE,  
Principal of Forth Valley College

### Impact

From 2013-2018, 849 pupils have participated in the SCOTS programme, with 814 successfully finishing the course, a completion rate of 96%. By tracking the young people’s journeys for three years afterwards it was found that 97% were in a positive destination (such as employment, full-time education or further training) the year following their graduation from the SCOTS programme, just when they reached statutory school leaving age.

A total of 91% remained in a positive destination two years after SCOTS and 85% were confirmed in a positive destination three years after completing SCOTS.

These are incredibly positive results, given that these young people were at risk of moving into a negative destination upon leaving school.

The results demonstrate the considerable impact that the programme is having on pupils upon leaving school and the College is delighted with the results.

### Moving forward

The College is now also working with Stirling and Clackmannanshire Council to offer the programme to high schools in their local authority area.

➤ **“We have already established a successful partnership over a number of years with our 18 local secondary schools, where more than 1000 pupils currently attend courses as part of our school college provision. We run many courses including SCOTS, Skills for Work, City and Guilds Qualifications, Foundation Apprenticeships across 10 frameworks and several HNCs. We want to keep building on the great foundation we have already established, ensuring that we are continually improving and expanding the provision, maximising opportunities for our young people in Forth Valley.”**

Helen Young, Head of Forth Valley College’s Learning and Quality

## 9. PATHWAYS TO APPRENTICESHIPS

A further example of School-College Partnerships promoting progression pathways is highlighted in the following case study. Future Skills College (FSC) is a collaboration involving Dundee City Council, Angus Council, Dundee & Angus College, Northwood Charitable Trust, local employers and secondary schools. The School-College Partnership provides a pre-apprenticeship pathway designed for secondary school students which is delivered in college and the workplace.

FSC is a response to research that highlights a concern that many young people, despite having successfully secured an initial positive destination on leaving school, had not sustained this at age 19.

FSC students usually spend one day per week on work placement with their future employer. This gives students the opportunity to work directly with other staff and be better ready to start an apprenticeship at the end of the course. They spend four days per week in college and continue on school rolls and continue to access Child Benefit, free school meals and bus passes as appropriate. FSC also has a full-time student support officer working on their behalf.



## CASE STUDY 9

# Providing pre-apprenticeship opportunities: Future Skills College Dundee

### Partners

Dundee City Council, Angus Council, Dundee & Angus College, Northwood Charitable Trust, local employers, secondary schools and others<sup>36</sup>

### Focus

A pre-apprenticeship pathway designed for secondary school students delivered in college and the workplace

### Success factors:

- A pre-apprenticeship pathway
- Involves a work placement
- Delivered in college while learners are still enrolled at school
- Progression to a full-time apprenticeship possible
- Managing transitions to work
- Addressing the school-work gap

➤ **“The Future Skills College is a future focused programme that supports the transition from school to college and prepares young people for work. The courses equip young people with the skills, knowledge and crucially, the experience that our local employers are looking for in their employees. Dundee and Angus College is proud to be part of a partnership that provides sustainable career pathways for the young people in our region.”**

Julie Grace, Vice Principal Curriculum and Attainment

➤ **“At the beginning of the Future Skills course I was shy and nervous around new people and didn’t really know anything about this course but now I feel I am more confident as a person, and I know many different things about childcare that will help me in the future.”**

Brooke, FSC Early Learning and Childcare

<sup>36</sup> The partnership also includes links with Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce, Dundee and Angus Developing the Young Workforce, Skills Development Scotland and the University of Dundee.

Future Skills College (FSC)<sup>37</sup> is a collaboration between Dundee City Council, Angus Council, Dundee & Angus College, Northwood Charitable Trust and local secondary schools.

### **A pre-apprenticeship pathway**

FSC is a response to research that highlights a concern that many young people, despite having successfully secured an initial positive destination on leaving school, had not sustained this at age 19.

A highly innovative approach to managing the transition from secondary education into the world of work, Future Skills College is a full-time, one year, pre-apprenticeship pathway designed for secondary school students.

Potential full-time apprenticeship opportunities with local employers are identified then learners secure these places through the school course choice process prior to entering S5 and S6 in Dundee City and Angus Council secondary schools.

### **Managing transitions to work**

Learners have access to a wide range of pre-apprenticeship courses including:

- Early learning and childcare
- Plumbing
- Joinery
- Electrical

FSC students usually spend one day per week on work placement with their future employer. This gives students the opportunity to work directly with other staff and be better ready to start an apprenticeship at the end of the course. They spend four days per week in college following specially designed pre-apprenticeship college courses in their chosen area of employment.

In addition, they have access to a broad curriculum, with a strong focus on literacy and numeracy as well as Health and Wellbeing and take part in a wide range of activities to build their confidence, widen their experience and gain additional qualifications. This has included Growth Mindset workshops, outdoor education activities as well as the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI)<sup>38</sup>.

FSC also has a full-time student support officer working on their behalf.

This innovative pathway to work also gives employers an opportunity to start building their own young workforce, enhancing recruitment opportunities and developing support for new employees.

### **Addressing the school-work gap**

Future Skills College represents a highly innovative approach to managing the transition from full-time secondary education into the world of work via college. The intervention closes the school-work gap by securing full-time employment for young people as apprentices in their chosen field.

### **Impact**

FSC opened in June 2017 and is currently in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of operation. 90 students have completed the course in its first three years. Despite COVID hitting last year's cohort very hard 48 FSC graduates secured full-time apprenticeships. At the time of writing all but 4 of the others are still in other positive destinations.

37 <https://www.futureskillscollege.org.uk/>

38 <https://ypiscotland.org.uk/>

## 10. DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE THROUGH FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIPS

A central plank of Developing the Young Workforce is the development and sustainability of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs). Strategic planning and collaboration between multiple partners can produce dynamic School-College Partnerships that provide insight into careers and pathways for young people and directly supports the Young Person's Guarantee. For FAs to be effective however, they need to be embedded in the senior school phase. One such example is evident in the partnership between Forth Valley College Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils and all 18 secondary schools across Forth Valley. The case study gives a flavour of what can be achieved when multiple partners work together.

The aim of the SCVP is to embed Foundation Apprenticeships in the senior phase. Forth Valley College figures show a significant rise in the number of FA Level 6 new starts from 19 in 2015 to 228 in 2020 and the number of FA graduates moving on to Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) and full-time college and university courses has also increased impressively in only three years.

Participating schools have the programmes now firmly embedded in their Senior Phase curriculum plans to prepare learners for the next phase of their learner journey, and continuing study in the same sector of their FA.

## CASE STUDY 10

# Embedding Foundation Apprenticeships in the senior phase: Forth Valley College

### Partners

Forth Valley College Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils, all 18 secondary schools across Forth Valley

### Focus

A rapid expansion of level 6 Foundation Apprenticeships since these were piloted in 2017. Participating schools have the programmes now firmly embedded in their Senior Phase curriculum plans to prepare learners for the next phase of their learner journey, and continuing study in the same sector as their FA.

Participating schools have the programmes now firmly embedded in their Senior Phase curriculum plans. FA delivery happens not only in the three FVC campuses but has also taken place in nine secondary schools across the three local authorities. Foundation Apprenticeships are a significant and important part of the Senior Phase offer within the overall School-College Partnership portfolio in Forth Valley.<sup>39</sup>

### Success factors:

- Delivery spans three local authority areas
- Pupils are given a wider choice of qualifications, beyond the qualifications that they are offered in school
- Enhances Senior Phase Curriculum choices
- Work placements
- Work experience is tailored and supported
- Local employer involvement
- Developing the Young Workforce and Skills Development Scotland

Former Larbert High School pupil Joely Reid (20), studied for a Foundation Apprenticeship in Financial Services at Forth Valley College. Now a Graduate Apprenticeship at Heriot-Watt University Joely hopes to complete her MA (Hons) Business Management Degree. She said:

“I chose to study the FA at FVC as this was a new and exciting opportunity to build on my work experience and knowledge, whilst being at school. I wasn’t fully sure of what I wanted to do when I left school, therefore I decided that doing this would give me the opportunity to explore college and work-life whilst continuing with my studies and gaining more qualifications. Studying my FA has benefitted me a great deal in both my professional career and my personal qualities. I believe that completing my FA fully gave me the confidence that I have today with public speaking and day-to-day tasks within the workplace. I learned from an early age compulsory office etiquette, and I believe this has got me to where I am today.”

### Impact

Since 2018 the number of FAs moving on to a MA at Forth Valley College has risen from three to 22, FAs moving on to full-time college courses has risen from 13 to 77 and this does not include all of the FAs taking up a place at university.

During the pandemic, dedication and determination from teenage Accountancy students (pictured above) claimed a Scottish first for Forth Valley College’s Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) programme.

<sup>39</sup> The Foundation Apprenticeship provision covers all three SCQF levels, 4, 5 and 6, ensuring pupils studying at different levels within the senior phase are able to participate in a wide range of work- based learning activity.



Despite the impact of the pandemic lockdown cancelling exams and leading to a scenario where the senior school pupils would not be able to complete work placements and Association of Accountancy Technicians (AAT) qualifications, the nine strong group of students, supported by enthusiastic lecturers, worked through the summer holidays to get the desired results.

This outstanding collaboration led to six of the nine becoming Scotland's only full FA Accountancy graduates and three others achieving the National Progression Award and letters of recognition.

Lecturers set them tasks and study activities to complete over the summer period and they attended refresher workshops in August when the campus opened up safely again. Exams were set up and managed (in a socially distant format) and six learners were able to achieve the full FA Accountancy qualification, the only ones across Scotland who achieved the full FA Accountancy award.

### **Moving forward**

Forth Valley College looks forward to a new year of FA delivery at Level 4, 5 and 6 with all of our secondary schools and to continue to work with their key university partners and employers to maximise the Apprenticeship Family offering to all of their young people.

St. Modan's High School Depute Head, Caradh Pert commented in the Skills Development Scotland Foundation Apprenticeships Progress Report, June 2021 (p.44):

“Since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and Developing the Young Workforce, schools have been charged with helping young people to articulate their skills. Foundation Apprenticeships allow schools to deliver this objective and St. Modan's is seeing huge benefits for our pupils as a result.

From the outset, providing Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF Level 6 opened clear pathways for our young people as we recognised that Highers were not the only route to gain qualifications highly valued by employers.

However, we recognised that there were other pupils that would benefit from work-based learning but weren't able to meet the criteria of a qualification at SCQF Level 6.

So, when we were approached about introducing a work-based learning qualification at SCQF Level 4 and 5 we jumped at the chance because we had already witnessed the benefits in co-creating with employers. The school now offers the pilot Foundation Apprenticeship in construction at both SCQF levels. We work with Forth Valley College to provide 18 fourth year pupils with the qualification at Level 4 and the school delivers the Level 5 qualification in-house to 20 senior phase pupils.

At St. Modan's, our pupils tend to stay on until sixth year and we need a diverse and inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of every young person.

The pilot was transformational for the pupils. All of them progressed on to positive destinations, including university or apprenticeships and most continued to pursue their careers within the construction sector.”

## 11. SCALING APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSITIONS

A key feature of successful School-College Partnerships lies in their ability to be sustainable. The following case study involving the South Lanarkshire Foundation Apprenticeships Consortium is one such example. Sustainability of the School-College Partnership is ensured by extending the reach of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) in South Lanarkshire whilst widening the range of FA provision available to local students.

This School-College Partnership is a partnership between South Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire College to provide opportunities for school pupils to engage in Foundation Apprenticeships either in a school hub or at the South Lanarkshire College campus. Pupils from South Lanarkshire schools are able to access a wider range of Foundation Apprenticeship opportunities at other College locations such as Glasgow and West Lothian where travel to learn patterns are more efficient and where the subject area is not available via the South Lanarkshire Consortium offer.

The Consortium approach to scaling and embedding Foundation Apprenticeship opportunities between South Lanarkshire College and South Lanarkshire Council has enabled more strategic planning and support for school pupils to participate in Foundation Apprenticeships. This is truly learner-centred as opportunities not available locally or within sensible travel patterns have been opened up to a small number of young people.

This inclusive approach allows Senior Phase learners to meet with other Foundation Apprenticeship learners from a wider geographical patch and enables a more diverse group of learners to mix with each other. This is a fantastic pre-cursor to leaving school and learning with peers from different schools and will support more effective transitions from school into college, university, employment and Modern Apprenticeships.

Young people in South Lanarkshire schools can gain access to Foundation Apprenticeships at Level 6 across a range of subject areas including Accountancy, Business Skills, Creative and Digital Media, Social Services, Children and Young People, Social Services Healthcare and Scientific Technologies.

## CASE STUDY 11

# Extending the Reach of Foundation Apprenticeships in South Lanarkshire

### Partners

South Lanarkshire College, South Lanarkshire Council, local schools and partner colleges in Glasgow and West Lothian

### Focus

Successful School-College Partnership programme which includes learners accessing opportunities outwith their local authority area

A partnership between South Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire College to provide opportunities for school pupils to engage in Foundation Apprenticeships either in a school hub or at South Lanarkshire College campus. Pupils

from South Lanarkshire schools are able to access a wider range of FA opportunities at other College locations such as Glasgow and West Lothian where travel to learn patterns are more efficient and where the subject area is not available via the South Lanarkshire Consortium offer.

### Success factors

- A consortium approach to scaling and embedding of Foundation Apprenticeship opportunities
- Learner centred, providing additional work-based learning opportunities not available locally
- Inclusive and diverse: students meet learners from other areas and different backgrounds



**My Brighter Future  
Foundation  
Apprenticeships**

**Aidan Bond**  
Cathkin High School

**SOUTH  
LANARKSHIRE  
COUNCIL**

**Aidan completed his Foundation Apprenticeship in Civil Engineering where he spent time at College and in a work placement with Robertson Homes.**

**“ Achieving my FA qualification really helped me to focus on being successful. When the Graduate Apprenticeship came up I felt confident enough to apply, my experiences from the course helped me in my interview. I’m looking forward to working and getting my degree at the same time. ”**

**Aidan progressed to employment with South Lanarkshire Council as a Graduate Apprentice in Civil Engineering working towards his degree at Glasgow Caledonian University.**

**South Lanarkshire  
Youth Employability  
Education Resources**

The representatives from the Local Authority leading the South Lanarkshire Consortium are from the Council's Education resource. The collaborative work is driven primarily by this team in response to the recommendations as set out in *Education working for all: developing Scotland's young workforce*<sup>40</sup>. A range of programmes have been developed to provide South Lanarkshire pupils with appropriate access as part of their timetable to work based learning options at varying levels.

Key DYW structures are in place to support these efforts including DWY school leads and support from the regional teams. This team are part of a Youth Employability structure that manages Senior Phase vocational learning programmes and in-school and post school employability services as part of the No-one Left Behind commitment and Youth Guarantee activity.

The model developed is a locality-based model that plans in-school work-based learning activity and post school employability support at a local level. This approach means that key transitions for young people are managed, planned and delivered effectively.

Key to the consortium is relationship-based practice. The consortium is at its core a relationship between two key partners for a common purpose. However, it is built on cross organisational relationships at key levels. For example, the consortium has a strategic management team who meet regularly and communicate frequently, we also request and encourage formal connections at team leader and faculty lead level who conduct framework lead meetings and discussions and front-line workers to have day to day programme specific contact.

We are: **“Driving strong solution-focused relationships at all levels”**

We believe: **“Flexibility and adaptability are key to delivering effective partnership programmes”**

➤ **“South Lanarkshire Council value the College partnerships currently in place and we could not deliver on our commitment to offer quality work-based learning options to Senior Phase pupils without our partners.”**

Scott MCDermott, Youth  
Employability Coordinator

### Impact

The programme is able to demonstrate the value of the consortium partnership through the outcomes achieved. This year, despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic the consortium has supported approximately 98% of young people who engaged and completed FA programmes to achieve their qualifications.

- In August there were 87 pupils taking part in FAs that were due to complete at the end of the current term (1 years and 2-year returners). Of these, 14 left the programme during the early stages with 73 remaining. Of these, 72 have achieved their Foundation Apprenticeship.
- In August 79 young people started on 2-year FA programmes. Of these 8 left early with the remaining 71 all completing year 1 and anticipated to return for their 2nd year

### Moving forward

Year on year work-based learning options in South Lanarkshire have grown and developed and have taken more prominence as part of a flexible and suitable offer to pupils in their Senior Phase of school. Critical to the continued development will be the Council/College partnerships of which the South Lanarkshire consortium is front and centre.

Funding is always a consideration however to use a sporting phrase it doesn't have to be a 'game changer'. It may just mean that these partnerships will rely heavily on the relationships and good practice the consortium have developed to maintain the pace of growth and success experienced to date.

40 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-working-commission-developing-scotlands-young-workforce-final-report/>

# SECTION 7: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

The case studies described in the previous section provide clear evidence that School-College Partnerships, often designed in collaboration with employers, yield tangible benefits to learners. Effective School-College Partnerships help young people to build their skills, confidence, knowledge, and qualifications and provide access to a range of pathways into positive destinations including further study at college or university or progressing directly into the workplace.

School-College Partnerships have a vital role to play in creating the seamless learner journey from the Senior Phase of school to college, university, or industry envisioned in the 15-24 Learner Journey Review. What this report also highlights, however, is the role that School-College Partnerships can play in skills development in both life skills and skills for work and in raising career aspirations right from the outset of the learner journey in the early years and primary schools. It also includes learners with additional support needs and those facing multiple disadvantage. Collaborative and pro-active partnership working between schools, colleges and industry can be seen to deliver greater personalisation and real choice to provide the best opportunities for young school leavers whilst serving regional and local economic skills needs.

Work-based learning is a key feature of college provision as it introduces a credible, meaningful vocational experience to young learners whilst

they are still at school. Driving forward the digital skills agenda is another positive outcome from School-College Partnerships. Both these success factors are very much in evidence in the case study examples of partners going above and beyond to maintain a positive learner experience during the pandemic. Resources were pooled and virtual workplace learning was developed and expanded to ensure that young people continued to receive the intended knowledge, skills, and experience associated with their qualifications.

Introducing learners to college whilst still at school can foster a sense of belonging in further and higher education, which is particularly important for groups such as supported learners. Learners experience the more self-reliant environment of college and begin to see it as a place for them. This is especially pertinent for those young people who are at risk of disengaging and withdrawing from school. The experience of meaningful college work-based learning, combined with skills profiling and a focus on careers alongside schoolwork better prepares school leavers for further study and the world of work.

Some of the case study examples of good practice in School-College Partnerships highlighted in this report have success factors that are unique to them: a focus on STEM, digital competencies, skills profiling, virtual workplace learning, raising career awareness in the early years, a net-zero carbon

footprint and so on. However, we have identified 10 key characteristics that all those case studies demonstrated:

1. Learner centred, personalised approach
2. Shared vision, values and aims
3. Evidenced-based
4. Inclusive
5. Local authority engagement
6. Collaboration and constructive relationships
7. Strong leadership
8. Industry as partners
9. Appreciation of different learning contexts
10. Continually evolving and improving

We expand on these key characteristics below as a starting point for further development, and we recommend that, based on the 10 characteristics and on deeper consideration of the case studies in this report together with other examples of good practice, further work is undertaken in order to:

- Increase our understanding of the impact of School-College Partnerships, their theory and practice and their role in supporting regional and national skills requirements.
- Build on the successful expansion of online learning during the COVID pandemic to further expand blended delivery of School-College Partnerships and effective employer links.
- Provide the sector with a platform through which it can identify and celebrate the range and variety of School-College Partnerships and provide support materials to assist with future development, delivery and evaluation of successful School-College Partnerships.

- Strengthen the wider partnerships relevant to industry engagement, including Developing the Young Workforce at national, regional and local level and Skills Development Scotland labour market insights and sectoral links.
- Work with extended stakeholder groups to explore the identified tensions in the OECD review between local curriculum flexibility as enshrined in Curriculum for Excellence and the need for coherence to achieve system-wide objectives.
- Use this work to feed into the implementation of the recommendations of the OECD and SFC reports, with particular reference to supporting regional approaches to the learner journey and skills development and alignment, including the proposed Tertiary Provision Pathfinders initiative.

On this basis we make the following recommendations:



## RECOMMENDATION 6

Using the 10 identified characteristics of successful School-College Partnerships as a starting point, CDN to work with the CLASS network, FACTS and the Vice Principal's Curriculum Group to create an effective planning and evaluation toolkit for the future development of School-College Partnerships. This resource will be linked to the SFC's proposed National Impact Framework to ensure that the value and impact of School-College Partnerships can be demonstrated as part of the revised approach to strategic provision planning and skills alignment.

## **RECOMMENDATION 7**

CDN to undertake further work with strategic stakeholders from schools, colleges, Scottish Government, SFC, SDS, ADES and other relevant organisations, using the present report as a starting point, to provide a comprehensive evaluation of School-College Partnerships in terms of their impact on progression and positive destinations. This work should include academic research into examples of good SCP practice to increase understanding of the theory and practice of delivering effective partnership programmes.

## **RECOMMENDATION 8**

Both the school and college sectors should build on the success of the move to online learning during the pandemic to focus on the learning from School-College Partnerships to deliver the Digital Ambition for Scotland's Colleges and the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland, through reviewing current provision, using integrated technology to transform and update programme content, developing common access to digital platforms and joint training on digital pedagogy.

In addition, we note the wide range of areas of impact demonstrated by the case studies, across the whole of the learner journey and a wide range of subject and skills areas and note the interdependency between these areas and the key policy drivers for the sector, such as those around inclusion and widening access, STEM, gender and digital ambition. We would encourage policymakers to consider how the evidence in this report and the further evidence that could be provided from the recommendations in this section can be used in support of the delivery of these key policies. In particular, we would encourage policymakers to explore the key role that Colleges can play in driving change and development, as evidenced throughout this section of the report.

## **RECOMMENDATION 9**

Further consideration should be given to exploring the interdependency between School-College Partnerships and key policy areas such as the STEM strategy, Access and Inclusion, Young Person's Guarantee, Developing the Young Workforce, Gender Action Plan and other Scottish Government strategies. This should be with a view to exploiting the capacity Colleges have to act as regional anchors to support key policy targets.



## The 10 Characteristics of Successful School-College Partnerships

### 1. Learner centred, personalised approach

School-College Partnerships should have the learner at the centre. Provision needs to be planned, developed, and delivered based on the needs of individual learners and cohorts. Partnerships must also recognise that parents' views are also important and influential for learners. The focus for an SCP and the key question to be addressed is: What's going to be the most positive experience for the learner to develop their aspirations, knowledge, skills, and experiences and to ensure they have access to a wide range of opportunities and pathways to FE, HE and work?

### 2. Shared vision, values and aims

For School-College Partnerships to be successful stakeholders have to share the same vision for the partnership. School-College Partnerships involve partners who each have a stake in terms of their respective contributions and priorities. For School-College Partnerships to be effective, however, the partners must also share the same values and aims for young people and a focus on developing and delivering School-College Partnerships that facilitate a smooth and inclusive learner journey at key points in the transition from school to college, university, and the workplace. The Curriculum for Excellence places learners at the heart of education. At its centre are four capacities. These capacities reflect and recognise the lifelong nature of education and learning. The four capacities are aimed at helping children and young people to become:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

Effective School-College Partnerships, therefore, need to place the learner at the centre of their design, development and delivery to ensure that young people are provided opportunities to develop these fundamental capacities.

### 3. Evidence based

An evidence-based approach to evaluating provision is necessary to provide the most benefit to learners in terms of positive learning experiences, protected characteristics, attainment of qualifications, outcomes, and destinations. This implies the need for shared expectations on the use of key performance indicators and the importance of data-sharing agreements.

### 4. Inclusive

The aim of School-College Partnerships is to offer a diverse portfolio of provision that has offers to suit all learners and appropriate subject areas. The needs of all learners should form the core of the partnership. Equity and equality for all learners need to be guaranteed and built into the design of the SCP. All learners should be able to participate regardless of socio-economic barriers or other additional characteristics.

### 5. Local authority engagement

A constructive relationship with the Local Authority Education/Children and Young People departments that acknowledges the drivers for the authority, and which is constructed around both the schools' and the college's role for Senior Phase delivery within that context.

## 6. Collaboration and constructive relationships

In developing School-College Partnerships all partners need to be clear about the purpose of the partnership and confident in their understanding of their role, responsibilities, and contributions. An evidence-based approach to planning and review is vital. Clarity around expectations, roles, and intended outcomes is paramount.

## 7. Strong leadership

The development and maintenance of collegiate, collaborative SCP relationships requires strong leadership and management. Leadership models employed within SCP collaboration will depend in many ways on the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the number and types of partners involved. However, if School-College Partnerships are to be designed, developed, implemented and sustained for maximum benefit to learners, a strong and resilient leadership team needs to be in place.

## 8. Industry as partners

Collaborative relationships are required between College staff, School staff, Guidance and Careers specialists and, where relevant, Developing the Young Workforce representatives for industry knowledge and liaison. The contribution of employers as part of work-based learning activities is vital. Such collaboration fosters a joint awareness and understanding of the opportunities for learners where the learners' needs are put first, as demonstrated within the design and delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships.

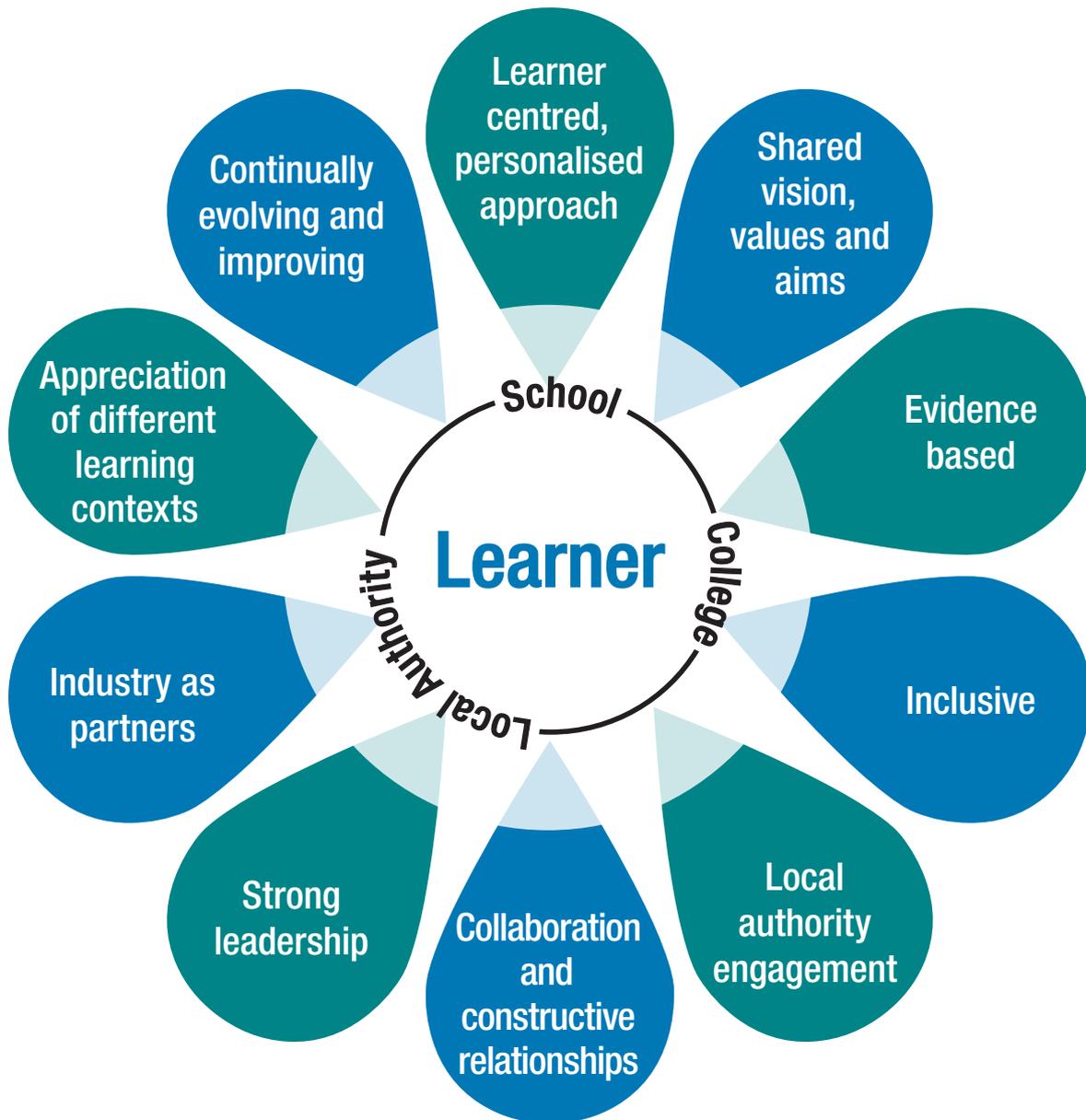
## 9. Appreciation of different learning contexts

Partners need to fully understand and appreciate the different contexts in which learning takes place and value the range of expertise accessible from a variety of delivery partners. Learners can benefit from exposure to a range of contexts and teaching methodologies as part of their entire learner journey from the Early Years and Primary School through Broad General Education & the Senior Phase and into college, university, or work, as well as varied pedagogical and assessment methods to support a better balance between the breadth and depth of learning throughout the Curriculum for Excellence.

## 10. Continually improving

To ensure sustainability, School-College Partnerships need to involve ongoing monitoring, review, and evaluation of outcomes for continuous improvement and future planning. SCP partnership activity can extend system change. Collaboration between schools and colleges can build curricular capacity at various levels of the system using evidence-based research to develop the environment of curriculum design support around schools, including supporting exchange and collaboration between practitioners for curriculum design and experimentation within and across schools.

## The 10 Characteristics of Successful School-College Partnerships



# SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Shining a light on a key delivery mechanism

The brief for this report was to provide a comprehensive picture of School-College Partnerships in Scotland and their key characteristics.

What has emerged is a picture of long-term growth and development, with colleges having a long history of working with schools that has been accelerated in recent years by the advent of the Developing the Young Workforce initiative and the Curriculum for Excellence.

The range and variety of School-College Partnerships is such that we have been able to review case studies across all stages of the learner journey under the following themes:

- Partnering with Primary Schools
- Addressing the STEM Agenda
- Developing Digital Skills and Competencies
- Gaining industry insight
- Managing Careers using Big Data and Skills Profiling
- Engaging learners in their skills development and profiling
- Work-based learning in focus
- Promoting Post-School Pathways
- Pathways to apprenticeships
- Developing the Young Workforce through Foundation Apprenticeships
- Scaling apprenticeship opportunities for transitions
- Characteristics of successful School-College Partnerships

We have seen that in 2018-19 there were 73,000 enrolments to School-College Partnerships by 60,000 individual students, and that in that year 16% of high school students participated. It is clear that this report is a timely review of the work of our School-College Partnerships and at a time of considerable change in education it seems wholly appropriate to shine a light on this work and make a case for its central role in a number of the key development areas for the learner journey.

## A definition

The attempt to define precisely what a School-College Partnership is or what it sets out to achieve is almost impossible given the range of activities they represent. We have therefore settled for an appropriately broad definition of a School-College Partnership as:

Any learning activity that involves young people aged 3-18 that is delivered by a College in collaboration with a School, either in School or in College, with a broad focus on skills for life and work and often with the involvement of employers.

## Supporting skills for the future

Through our case studies we have reviewed what are in fact only a small sample of the huge variety of School-College Partnerships delivered through our Colleges across Scotland. In effect, in the limited time available for this report we have only scratched the surface. We believe that there is scope for much deeper study of School-College Partnerships that will help us to understand how their continued growth can support skills profiling, career support

and a wide range of personalised learner journeys that will develop our young workforce to meet the challenges of entering the world of work in uncertain times where their vision, energy and creativity will be essential to securing a sustainable future.

## The 10 Characteristics

With even the limited range of examples in this report we have been able to establish a clear sense of what is required to deliver a successful School-College Partnership. One of our key recommendations is that we don't stop there, but work with the talented network of colleagues in schools and colleges who deliver the work of the Partnerships to further investigate the theoretical and practical underpinnings of School-College Partnerships and provide sector-wide support for their future development and evaluation.

This work will be based around the ten identified characteristics of School-College Partnerships described in this report:

1. Learner-Centred, personalised approach.
2. Shared vision, values and aims.
3. Evidence-based.
4. Inclusive.
5. Local authority engagement.
6. Collaborative and constructive relationships.
7. Strong leadership.
8. Industry as partners.
9. Appreciation of different learning contexts.
10. Continually evolving and improving.

We have included a recommendation on the undertaking of further work in this area which we believe can be directly linked to the SFC's proposed National Impact Framework to ensure that the impact and scale of School-College Partnerships can be fully appreciated and included in national strategic planning.

## Regional Anchors

The Cumberford-Little Report<sup>41</sup> describes colleges as 'inherently connected institutions' working closely with schools, Developing the Young Workforce and supporting tertiary education pathways. The report also emphasises the need for close working between colleges and key sector agencies to enable effective regional planning. In particular, the role of colleges in supporting skills alignment and the 'apprenticeship family' forms a key part of the report's recommendations.

Throughout this report we have identified the role colleges can play in a seamless learner journey, but more than that, in the raising of career aspirations and developing meta-skills from the early years and primary (seen in the case studies of work with primary and early years pupils at Edinburgh College and New College Lanarkshire) all the way to supporting Developing the Young Workforce and delivering Foundation Apprenticeships such as those in creative and digital media at Moray College UHI.

Colleges have allocated resource to the co-ordination of Foundation Apprenticeships between schools and employers, including helping employers to develop learning approaches and assessments. They are the active link between schools, employers and pupils. This is clearly demonstrated in our case studies including NESCol's work with Balfour Beattie and Forth Valley College's embedding of Foundation Apprenticeships in the senior phase. It is also evident in the consortium approach taken by South Lanarkshire College to extending the reach of FAs in their region.

These studies serve to amplify the points made in the Cumberford-Little recommendations around the role of colleges as regional anchors providing a range of learning experiences across different SCQF levels, and as we have identified in our report, this role will be crucial to the implementation of the SFC review recommendations, in particular the Tertiary Provision Pathfinders and the development of the National Impact Framework.

41 <https://view.pagetiger.com/inlhij/1/PDF.pdf>

The OECD review highlights the potential role that Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) can play in coordinating the development of the Senior Phase to match the vision of the Curriculum for Excellence, and in this context serious consideration should be given to the role of the RICs in supporting School-College Partnerships including ensuring that the SCP curriculum is prioritised within schools and clearly linked to DYW and FA provision, a point further reinforced by the SFC review recommendations.

## Rapid growth

Between 2016-17 and 2019-20 SCP enrolments rose steadily from 53k to almost 73k. Anecdotal evidence from Colleges suggests that while enrolments in 2020-21 continued this trend (including FAs), there has been a 'COVID dip' in completion rates and in enrolments for 2021-22, although there is also a likelihood that pupils wishing to repeat a year may have a knock-on effect on demand.

If we assume that once we have recovered from the 'COVID dip' the upward trend continues we will rapidly reach the point where 100,000 pupils are involved in School-College Partnerships (including Foundation Apprenticeships). That would represent 12% of all school pupils in Scotland engaging in study with a College and around 25% of senior phase pupils.

## Increasing Choice, Embedding Skills

School-College Partnerships increase choice by expanding the available subjects pupils can study, especially in rural areas, as shown clearly by the success of Highland Virtual School. The short-term impact of COVID and schools reprioritising towards their own local provision has reduced choice and emphasises this point.

SDS have highlighted the importance of School-College Partnerships in embedding the meta-skills agenda by linking provision in Primary, BGE and Senior Phase (including FAs) to work and further education. The SDS project to profile skills through My World of Work has Dundee and Angus College as a key partner in a 'seamless learner journey approach to skills profiling'. This is also an area that has been temporarily impacted by COVID with provision being focussed on Senior Phase at the expense of engagement with Primary and BGE according to some Colleges.

However, the response to COVID has also shown that School-College Partnerships are in many cases well-suited to virtual delivery, as demonstrated by the Highland Virtual School programme, where choice is increased, and delivery is robust (virtually unaffected by COVID restrictions for example). This has included FAs being immersed in online work experience.



Moray College UHI – school pupils studying beauty.

## **Working at the intersection of schools, skills and tertiary education**

The scale, impact and potential of School-College Partnerships as a core part of a seamless learner journey should be recognised at a strategic/policy level. As we recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic and respond to major reports such as the OECD and SFC reviews, further development should be a priority and be adequately resourced. In order to achieve this, we need to build on the information in the current report to continue to increase our understanding of the scale and impact of School-College Partnerships and their role in improving the learner journey and skills alignment.

Our work shows that School-College Partnerships intersect with a wide range of key policies and development areas, and this should be further explored to ensure that the expertise and knowledge contained within School-College Partnerships and the teams that deliver them is fully supported and utilised in future planning and delivery of a coherent tertiary system that links seamlessly to the whole learner journey and skills landscape.

## **A starting point**

The recommendations that follow, and which are also identified in the body of the report, are designed to build on the learning from this initial review of the range and scale of School-College Partnerships.

This report is, we hope, the starting point for increased recognition at national level of the role colleges and schools working together can play in supporting skills for work, the learner journey and regional planning. For this reason, we have not dwelt on the challenges experienced in the past eighteen months, although it was the discussion of these challenges by the Curriculum and Assessment Board that led to the report being commissioned. It is clear that much has been learned by the necessity of responding to the pandemic and to the need to continue delivering in lockdown, and this learning will inform future development.

The recommendations, however, are forward-looking and propose the key areas in which further work can be undertaken and in which the value and impact of School-College Partnerships and the knowledge and expertise of those who deliver them can be included in future planning and development. The recently launched CDN Research and Enhancement Centre, of which this report is one early output, will we hope be a key resource in taking this work forward.



# THE RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDATION 1

School-College Partnerships to be recognised and identified as a key vehicle for the implementation of the OECD's *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* recommendations on the creation of a coherent learning experience for young people aged 3-18.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

SFC to recognise the importance of the School-College Partnership in future funding as an integral part of the learner journey, particularly in work-based learning and vocational qualifications (for example Foundation Apprenticeships in the Senior Phase) and in the light of the OECD's *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* report and actions. School-College Partnerships give real experience of potential career pathways and career decision-making from an early age through primary and into the broad general education and the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

SFC to commission a mapping exercise to identify existing and planned School-College Partnership activity that can be developed or extended to support the implementation of the learner-journey and skills-related recommendations of the SFC's *Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research*.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

Colleges to work with SFC to ensure that key staff involved in developing and delivering School-College Partnerships are included in the implementation of the *SFC's Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research* through the work of the proposed Tertiary Provision Pathfinders, the review of Outcome Agreements, the related data, analytics and evidence-sharing work and the development of the National Impact Framework.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

Establish an annual statistical report on School-College Partnerships to allow meaningful and consistent comparison across school/college provision and mapping to local planning processes including regional skills assessments. The report will interrogate cross-sectoral data sources to provide key performance indicators/ measures of success on enrolment, progression, attainment and positive destinations for all students at national and regional levels.

 **RECOMMENDATION 6**

Using the 10 identified characteristics of successful School-College Partnerships as a starting point, CDN to work with the CLASS network, FACTS and the Vice Principal's Curriculum Group to create an effective planning and evaluation toolkit for the future development of School-College Partnerships. This resource will be linked to the SFC's proposed National Impact Framework to ensure that the value and impact of School-College Partnerships can be demonstrated as part of the revised approach to strategic provision planning and skills alignment.

 **RECOMMENDATION 7**

CDN to undertake further work with strategic stakeholders from schools, colleges, Scottish Government, SFC, SDS, ADES and other relevant organisations, using the present report as a starting point, to provide a comprehensive evaluation of School-College Partnerships in terms of their impact on progression and positive destinations. This work should include academic research into examples of good SCP practice to increase understanding of the theory and practice of delivering effective partnership programmes.

 **RECOMMENDATION 8**

Both the school and college sectors should build on the success of the move to online learning during the pandemic to focus on the learning from School-College Partnerships to deliver the Digital Ambition for Scotland's Colleges and the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland, through reviewing current provision, using integrated technology to transform and update programme content, developing common access to digital platforms and joint training on digital pedagogy.

 **RECOMMENDATION 9**

Further consideration should be given to exploring the interdependency between School-College Partnerships and key policy areas such as the STEM strategy, Access and Inclusion, Young Person's Guarantee, Developing the Young Workforce, Gender Action Plan and other Scottish Government strategies. This should be with a view to exploiting the capacity Colleges have to act as regional anchors to support key policy targets.

# SECTION 9: REFERENCES

## All links checked at the time of publication.

Colleges Scotland (2020) Our Digital Ambition for Scotland's Colleges. <https://collegesscotland.ac.uk/our-work/1574-our-digital-ambition-for-scotland-s-colleges/file.html>

Cumberford & Little (2020) The Cumberford-Little Report: One Tertiary System: Agile, Collaborative, Inclusive. <https://view.pagetiger.com/inlhij/1/PDF.pdf>

Developing the Young Workforce (2015) Career Education Standard (3-18). <https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/dyw2-career-education-standard-0915.pdf>

Developing the Young Workforce (2015) School/Employer Partnerships. [https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW\\_GuidanceforSchoolEmployerPartnerships0915.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW_GuidanceforSchoolEmployerPartnerships0915.pdf)

Developing the Young Workforce (2015) Work Placements Standard. [https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW\\_WorkPlacementStandard0915.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/Documents/DYW_WorkPlacementStandard0915.pdf)

Education Scotland (2020) How Good is Our College? <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/how-good-is-our-college>

Education Scotland (2021) How Good is Our School? (HGIOS4) <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/hgios4/>

Glasgow Kelvin College: Transitions to Learning & Work. <https://bit.ly/GKCTransitions>

McVittie, James (2008) National Qualifications: A Short History. SQA [https://www.sqa.org.uk/files\\_ccc/PNP\\_ResearchReport3\\_NationalQualificationsAShortHistory.pdf](https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/PNP_ResearchReport3_NationalQualificationsAShortHistory.pdf)

OECD (2021) Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence\\_bf624417-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence_bf624417-en)

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Putting learners at the heart of education. <https://scotlandscurriculum.scot/>

Scottish Funding Council (2020) Access and Inclusion Guidance 2020-2023. [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance\\_sfcgd202019/Access\\_and\\_Inclusion\\_Guidance\\_2020-23.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd202019/Access_and_Inclusion_Guidance_2020-23.pdf)

Scottish Funding Council (2020) Coherence and sustainability: A review of Scotland's Colleges and Universities Phase One Report: Insights to Develop Further. [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications\\_sfccp052020/Review\\_of\\_Coherent\\_Provision\\_and\\_Sustainability\\_Phaae\\_1\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications_sfccp052020/Review_of_Coherent_Provision_and_Sustainability_Phaae_1_Report.pdf)

Scottish Funding Council (2021) Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research. <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Review/coherence-and-sustainability.pdf>

Scottish Funding Council (2020) College Outcome Agreement Guidance 2020-21: Additional Information: DYW Developing the Young Workforce Progress Report 2020-21. [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance\\_sfcgd202019/DYW\\_Progress\\_Report\\_Guidance\\_for\\_Colleges.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd202019/DYW_Progress_Report_Guidance_for_Colleges.pdf)

Scottish Funding Council (2016) Gender Action Plan. [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Corporate\\_publications\\_SFCCP052016\\_GenderActionPlan/SFCCP052016\\_Gender\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Corporate_publications_SFCCP052016_GenderActionPlan/SFCCP052016_Gender_Action_Plan.pdf)

Scottish Government (2020) Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2017/10/blueprint-2020-expansion-early-learning-childcare-scotland-quality-action-plan/documents/00526782-pdf/00526782-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00526782.pdf>

Scottish Government (2014) Developing the young workforce: Scotland's youth employment strategy. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-young-workforce-scotlands-youth-employment-strategy/pages/1/>

Scottish Government (2019) Developing the young workforce: fifth annual progress report 2018-2019. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-young-workforce-fifth-annual-progress-report-2018-19/>

Scottish Government (2016) Enhancing learning and teaching through the use of digital technology: A digital learning and teaching strategy for Scotland. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2016/09/enhancing-learning-teaching-through-use-digital-technology/documents/00505855-pdf/00505855-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00505855.pdf>

Scottish Government: Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

Scottish Government (2020) Growing the Young Person's Guarantee. <https://www.gov.scot/news/growing-the-young-persons-guarantee/>

Scottish Government (2018) 15-24 Learner Journey Review: Report of the Scottish Government's review of education provision for 15-24 year olds. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/15-24-learner-journey-review-9781788518741/>

Scottish Government (2012) Opportunities for All: supporting all young people to participate in post-16 learning, training or work. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/opportunities-supporting-young-people->

[participate-post-16-learning-training-work/](#)

Scottish Government (2018) Regional Improvement Collaboratives Interim Review. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/regional-improvement-collaboratives-rics-interim-review/documents/>

Scottish Government (2017) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: education and training strategy. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/science-technology-engineering-mathematics-education-training-strategy-scotland/>

Scottish Government (2020) Scotland's Careers Strategy – Moving Forward: Fairer Scotland Duty. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-careers-strategy-moving-forward-fairer-scotland-duty/>

Scottish Government (2021) STEM Strategy for Education and Training: Third Annual Report. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/stem-strategy-education-training-scotland-third-annual-report/>

Skills Development Scotland (2018) Skills 4.0: A skills model to drive Scotland's future. [https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40\\_a-skills-model.pdf](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40_a-skills-model.pdf)

Skills Development Scotland (2019) Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland: 2019–2021 Key issues and priority actions. <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/45683/skills-action-plan-for-rural-scotland-summary-report.pdf>

Skills Development Scotland (2021) Foundation Apprenticeships Progress Report. <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/47943/fa-progress-report-july-2021.pdf>

Wood, Sir Ian (2014) Education working for all: developing Scotland's young workforce. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-working-commission-developing-scotlands-young-workforce-final-report/>

# SECTION 10: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Steering Group would like to thank the following organisations who provided support and information for this report. We apologise for any omissions and wish to express our gratitude to everyone who gave their time and expertise to inform our work.

Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)

Aberdeen City Council

Argyll and Bute Council

Ayrshire College

Balfour Beattie

CLASS (College Liaison in Association with Scottish Schools)

Clackmannanshire Council

Colleges Scotland

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Dundee and Angus College

Developing the Young Workforce

East Ayrshire Council

East Lothian Council

East Renfrewshire Council

Edinburgh College

Education Scotland

Fife College

Fife Council

Forth Valley College

Glasgow Kelvin College

Inverclyde Council

Inverness College UHI

LEAD Scotland

Learning Directorate, Scottish Government

Midlothian Council

Moray College UHI

New College Lanarkshire

North Ayrshire Council

North East Scotland College

North Highland College UHI

Renfrewshire Council

Scottish Funding Council

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Skills Development Scotland

South Ayrshire Council

South Lanarkshire College

South Lanarkshire Council

West Dunbartonshire Council

West Highland College UHI

# APPENDIX

## Outcome of the targeted review into School-College Partnership response to Covid-19 for Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB)

**December 2020**

### Purpose

To ask the members of the Curriculum and Assessment Board to note the outcome of the targeted review on School-College Partnerships and to support a continuation of the study with a more in-depth analysis with recommendations on the impact of Covid-19 on young learners.

### Background

1. On the 9th of September 2020 a paper updating CAB (CAB-12(01)) on the re-opening of schools drew attention to reported tensions and the potential for quality issues where a young person is attending different establishments.
2. As a consequence of the points raised, a meeting was agreed to understand the position of the school/college responses to Covid-19, to be clear of the issues being raised and to build an evidence base to provide solution focussed outcomes. In the meeting were representatives from the Colleges Principals Group, the CEO College Development Network (CDN) and senior representatives from Scottish Government and Education Scotland.
3. Quite early on, it was unclear to those attending what specifically was meant by the general reference to “tensions” in relation

to school/ college partnership delivery post COVID 19 in the curriculum paper though discussion at CAB had suggested that any such tensions might be more regionally focused.

4. As discussion developed, consensus emerged that there did not appear to be one uniform tension or problem with regard to impact of COVID 19 on collaboration between schools and colleges across the country at the operational level. However there did appear to be some regional variance in terms of confidence and certainty in applying the recently published guidance on returning to schools, specifically about what to offer and how in a context where young people may not be able to move as freely. It was recognised there was the need for a better awareness and understanding as to the breadth of experiences across the country of school/ college partnerships.
5. As an outcome, a short life working group (SLWG) was convened by the College Principals Group (CPG) to engage with colleges, schools and LAs and included the Colleges Scotland Vice Principals Group on Curriculum, the School/College Partnership Network (CLASS), Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and DYW practitioners to identify and suggest actions to address any potential issues but

also to examine and report best practise and identify actions for improved awareness and communication. The Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) and Education Scotland would be part of the engagement to consider the school perspective. The scoping document and agreed questions can be seen in Appendix 1. Finally, it was agreed an update report would be presented to CAB and CPG by Christmas and an update presented to CAB at their meeting on 2nd December.

### Key considerations from the targeted review

6. Over the last two months, the SLWG has combined qualitative analysis from 15 Local Authorities, 9 Regional colleges, feedback from CLASS representatives with quantitative data to 2018/19 from SFC and SDS.
7. In 2018/19 there were 72,799 school college enrolments across the 13 Regional Colleges and 3,445 Foundation Apprenticeships (FA's). This was a 19% increase on enrolments from 2017/18 (61,144) and a 15.6% increase on the year before (52,904). The data has not been finalised for enrolments in 19/20 but it's estimated this will be around 90,000 enrolments including FA's.
8. The review identified there were indeed tensions with the School-College Partnerships which arose as a consequence of the circumstances and pressures created by having to respond quickly to Covid-19. This was well articulated by one respondent:
 

“No fault of partnership, strong working relationships in most cases, but tensions unavoidable.”
9. Further analysis clarified the tensions and difficulties for school/college partnership as being caused by the following:
  - General early frustrations from both parties during the Covid-19 pandemic response. In the main these were attributed to:
  - The need for better systematic, joined up and timely planning and communication, recognising this was made difficult by the different timing of guideline announcements and the fact guidelines were also different between sectors. This included H&S in areas such as social distancing, numbers in classrooms, practical delivery and placements. It was recognised that the need for long term planning was not a luxury any partner had.
  - Access and security issues on different learning portals and the need for better preparation for online learning. It was recognised that for all sectors, the move to online delivery was an emergency response with a few exceptions where virtual learning had been already well established prior to the pandemic, such as the Highland Virtual School. College learners are currently working from home on virtual platforms. In schools, most students are utilising school and personal equipment in the schools and space to study has been problematic as well as the need for supervision.
10. School-College Partnerships are recognised by all parties as being a key component of the Senior Phase representing an average of 22% of College activity in session 2018/19 and over 72,000 enrolments. The opportunity provided by Foundation Apprenticeships has been seized with a doubling of numbers across the last two years and potential for growth through established DYW networks of employers, schools and colleges.

11. In the main, School-College Partnerships are well established with strong management support and groups are working towards future planning for 2021/22. The opportunities for the use of high-quality on-line delivery, support for appropriate digital pedagogy and access to the right equipment in the right place should be further examined.
12. Travel issues were not seen as problematical from respondents being managed at the local level by both schools and colleges.
13. In the responses, there were a number of references to Education Scotland's recent collaborative publication on Learner Pathways: A key to successful curriculum design. This is a collaborative report on what schools, communities and Government could do to support curriculum design around each learner and can be used to inform and shape the future options for school/college partnerships going forward particularly in relation to the increase in digital capacity.
14. However, some respondents recognised there were a few instances where the relationship between the schools, local authorities and the regional college were not strong particularly in timeous communication on both programme development and changes to delivery modes.
15. There was not a single example of a regional college working directly with Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs).
16. Many respondents commented that the DYW funding for DYW Coordinators was not in place noting concern for the sustainability of the historical work that had been undertaken by the DYW teams.
17. In the wake of the recent experiences of the 2020 exams and most recently with the advent of the Tiering system, concern was noted for the need for an equitable approach

to learners from the SQA with clear guidelines to all schools and colleges, recognising the considerable volume of school-college activity.

## Looking forward

18. The analysis from the respondents has shown that for session 20/21, the numbers from the school/college partnerships are either stable or increasing in what continues to be a difficult year. It is extremely important, therefore, to ensure any remaining tensions are resolved for a substantial cohort of young people.
19. The impact on School-College Partnership success for learners as a consequence of Covid-19 measures was not part of this work however it should be a key component of a Phase 2 study using the excellent data collated as part of this review. This Phase 2 study should focus on analysis of the data for learners in attainment, achievement, progression, best value, positive destination, improved awareness, sharing of best practise in pedagogy and infrastructure arrangements. Securing successful outcomes for young people undertaking courses in 20/21 is the most pressing concern for School-College Partnerships.
20. The review highlighted a number of areas for where CAB members could support continued improvement in school-college partnerships:
  - As the School-College Partnership is seen as a core and interdependent component of the Senior Phase which has real and tangible enrichment for young learners, there is a need for a strategic overview and reporting mechanism for a young person's achievement and attainment to be recorded to ensure the totality of the Senior Phase is measured.

- The role of the regional college in the RICs should be explored because of the strategic impact on learners.
- Improved awareness raising of successful regional models as part of a regional educational ecosystem potentially underpinned by development of the Learner Pathways project.
- Sustaining the excellent networking capacity of DYW with employers, enhancing pathways, subject choice and careers guidance.
- Review of SFC decision to focus on credit activity for the Senior Phase. This has been to the detriment of some excellent projects in the BGE phase and in Primary Schools, including STEM in Primary projects, linked to learner pathways and subject choice.

### Points for discussion

- To note the outputs from this targeted review on the impact of Covid-19 on School-College Partnerships and the positive feedback from partners.

- To agree the need for further work through a Phase 2 analysis of data to identify the impact of Covid-19 on School-College Partnership learners leading to one final report. Colleges Scotland could lead on this work and report to CAB in the future. Importantly though, the work should provide a “heads up” on the in-year position for young learners.
- Notwithstanding a Phase 2 analysis, what actions can be taken forward now, for example in the implementation of Learner Pathways (13), addressing the bullet points in (9 and 20) and in seeking an equitable approach to learner qualification (17).

### Key Issues Identified:

1. Timetabling
2. Disparity between government guidelines for schools and colleges
3. Inflexibility of criteria
4. Practical Delivery challenges

## Appendix 1

### The College Short Life Working Group identified the following points for consideration:

- What impact has the COVID restrictions had on scoping the school college offer for the next academic year across each region?
  - What is the college feedback on new awarding bodies' guidance on assessment strategies for this academic year?
  - Where DYW co-ordinators have been established, what benefits are seen as emerging in the short (COVID) term and longer (business as usual) term?
  - Is there involvement with the Regional Improvement Collaborative(s) for your area with School-College Partnerships in relation to the response to Covid-19?
  - What is the role of your DYW employer group(s) during the Covid-19 crisis?
  - At operational level, describe what you see that could be described as tensions between colleges and schools following the introduction of Covid\_19 restrictions and how could they have been mitigated?
- What is the line of communication and engagement between regional colleges, school managers and curriculum leads?
  - Where are School-College Partnerships working well in particular to the solutions in place for the digital offer and why? Include here responsive DYW collaborations have been in the different regions)
  - With information from SFC and with a comparison for the last three years for each college region, what are the number of learners involved, percentage of school-college activity by region, by SCQF level and subject areas.?
  - With information from SDS and comparison with previous years what has been the uptake of Foundation Apprenticeships for each college region?
  - Are regional colleges actively promoting post-school progression opportunities to school pupils for further, higher and work-based learning options, including access to university via a college-university articulation route? What are the approaches taken?
  - How is the movement of young people being managed, both getting to the college and within college?



[www.cdn.ac.uk](http://www.cdn.ac.uk)

 College Development Network

 @ColDevNet  CDN  CDN

