

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET: 3 DECEMBER 2008

### SCHOOL COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP

#### Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of current activity, future developments, and present strengths and areas for development in school college partnership.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 East Ayrshire Council and its schools have developed strong and effective links with local colleges for many years, to enhance curricular choice for a wide range of students. The Scottish Government's national strategy includes developing skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. Schools do not have the capacity to provide every aspect of curricular choice for their students, and consequently foster partnership working with a variety of outside agencies, including Scotland's Colleges to help ensure a wide range of courses and programmes including skills for work and vocational programmes are on offer to young people. *Building the Curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching* (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2008) reinforces the place of partnership working to deliver a full curriculum and the guidance emphasises that young people should receive support in moving to a 'positive and sustained destination.'
- 2.2 *Lifelong Partners*, the Scottish Government's strategy for school-college partnership, refers to partnerships as "the key interactions between schools, colleges, local education authorities and other agencies that sustain and extend educational experiences principally for young people at S3 and above. The Strategy reinforces joint working arrangements between schools, colleges and other agencies that emphasises the importance of joint contribution to an appropriate and successful transition for young people from school to the next stages in education, employment or training. In particular, partnerships can provide work-related experiences and career education, and contribute to the development of skills and knowledge relevant to pupils' vocational interests, employability skills, core skills and personal and social skills."
- 2.3 Schools seek to offer opportunities for wider achievement through A Curriculum for Excellence, and a range of enrichment programmes devised to enhance skills for work, learning and for life. The flexibility available in local colleges helps them to manage wider curricular choices. In addition all local colleges work collaboratively with East Ayrshire Council's schools to increase

the opportunities available to the More Choices, More Chances (previously Not in Education, Employment or Training - NEET) cohort.

- 2.4** The *Determined to Succeed* national programme requires that young people have opportunities in world of work activity, 16+ Learning Choices and Skills for Work qualifications. East Ayrshire Council has two seconded teacher's working with schools to manage this agenda.

### **3. CURRENT ACTIVITY**

- 3.1** East Ayrshire Council has strategic links and effective partnership with all three Ayrshire Colleges, Ayr College, James Watt College and Kilmarnock College. Doon Academy has a Kilmarnock College annex on its campus, and Cumnock Community College enjoys partnership working between Ayr and Kilmarnock Colleges. The Authority also works closely with Careers Scotland and Skills Development Scotland to deliver and improve services to young people.

- 3.2** Students from all secondary schools, some special schools, and Youth Strategy, access appropriate full time and part time courses from S3 to S6, including School Link, Skills for Work, Winter Leavers and Advanced Highers.

- 3.3** The courses at Ayr College include 'Try the Trades', Construction, Electrical Engineering, Access to Building Crafts, Fashion and Clothing, Introduction to Care, Digital Media, Computing, Hospitality, Business, and Administration. Some 42 students enrolled to begin a Winter Leavers programme. The campuses in Ayr and Cumnock are both used to deliver courses.

- 3.4** At Kilmarnock College Advanced Highers in French, Biology, Chemistry and Physics have been offered in recent years, with very positive results. Demand fluctuates year by year, and the College can usually offer Advanced Higher courses if there is sufficient demand. In session 07-08, nearly 500 students accessed Link Courses for S3 and S4 pupils, with a retention rate of 73%. The current session has similar uptake. Skills for Work courses in 'Early Years Education and Childcare', 'Construction/Engineering', 'Hairdressing and Hospitality' were successful with high retention rates. The Winter Leavers course attracted 60 applicants for 45 places, comprising three classes of 15 students, an increase of 90% from last session. A 'Leadership Academy', designed for 14-16 year-old pupils, is supported by the European Social Fund, and includes team-building, outdoor education, performing arts and team challenges. This programme aims to enhance core skills in communication, problem solving and working with others.

- 3.5** James Watt College has a few East Ayrshire students at its Kilwinning Campus.

### **4 STRENGTHS**

#### **4.1 LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**

The Leadership Academy, a programme designed for 14-16 year-old pupils, is a joint venture between the college and East Ayrshire Council. A programme runs each week with 14 pupils from S3/S4. All of the Council's secondary schools and one special school are involved.

HMIe writes "The programme was very well received by schools and highly rated by the participants, many of whom developed more positive attitudes to education. These attitudes were evident when college staff paid a follow-up visit to the groups in their schools eight weeks after the programme. A significant number of pupils intended to apply for a college course although many had previously not considered it, and others reported success in achieving goals they had set during the programme. The programme succeeded in its aims to develop confidence and aspirations of pupils as well as other essential skills." (HMIe Follow-up review Kilmarnock College 16 May 2008).

#### **4.2 SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

Kilmarnock College has recently trained a large number of staff in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), enabling many of the school link courses at the college to achieve comparable ratings with SQA and national courses.

#### **4.3 LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS AYRSHIRE**

Careers Scotland recently hosted a pan-Ayrshire school/college conference, which attracted delegates from across Ayrshire and Scotland. It focused on bringing teachers of guidance up to a greater level of understanding of college courses and procedures, and college staff to understand the schools' perspective better. As a result, three working parties continue to meet, including representatives from the three Ayrshire authorities and their schools, to take forward an improvement agenda in the key areas of selection and induction for school pupils entering colleges, support mechanisms while studying, and tracking their progress beyond the college experience. Best practice will be publicised and shared across Ayrshire, and should bring about improved selection and retention of appropriate students studying appropriate courses.

#### **4.4 MORE CHOICES, MORE CHANCES**

East Ayrshire Council was recognised by the Scottish Government as having the largest relative increase in positive destinations' in Scotland. Many factors have been responsible for this including the innovative courses offered at Ayrshire's colleges and flexible links between schools, colleges and the world of work.

#### **4.5 16+ LEARNING CHOICES**

All three colleges are in partnership working to deliver the highest quality and range of appropriate courses for all East Ayrshire's school leavers. Two pilot schools, James Hamilton Academy and Stewarton Academy, have already begun working with Careers Scotland to offer all winter leavers a learning opportunity, and in session 2009-10 all schools, including special schools, will join this national programme.

### **5 AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

#### **5.1 RECOGNITION OF WIDER ACHIEVEMENT**

A working party is currently looking at ways to record, recognise and reward pupils' achievements in addition to their academic attainment. An audit of school, college and local authority activity is taking place and the group will provide advice and guidance to allow this to be more consistently applied and developed across the authority.

#### **5.2 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

All schools, colleges and Careers Scotland are still to develop having a common information management system to allow tracking destination data to be shared easily amongst partners.

#### **5.3 DATA TRANSFER**

Some legal protocols remain to be resolved to allow the transfer of information on school leavers to be shared between schools, colleges, Careers Scotland and other partners. The Scottish Government is aware of the challenges and aims to advise local authorities of the best way forward.

#### **5.4 CAPACITY OF 16+ LEARNING CHOICES**

The pilot phase of the 16+ Learning choices programme will test the capacity of schools and colleges, training providers and other third sector partners to offer meaningful, positive and sustained programmes of education and training for all school leavers.

#### **5.5 COLLEGE COURSES**

There is great scope for colleges to offer an even greater variety of appropriate courses for our young people. The new qualifications outlined in the national consultation, and the emerging structure of *Building the Curriculum 3*, will bring clarity and further opportunities for schools and colleges to build on the foundations of collaborative working.

### **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Nil.

## 7 POLICY/LLEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil.

## 8 COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 School-college partnership working described in the paper contributes directly to promoting Community Learning and Improving Opportunities.

## 9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Members

- (i) encourage the provision of appropriate vocational courses in partnership with Ayrshire's Colleges
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Graham Short  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

DF/MMcK  
November 2008

### LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- i) *Lifelong Partners: Scotland's Schools and Colleges Building the Foundations of a Lifelong Learning Society: A Strategy for Partnership* Scottish Executive (2005)
- ii) *How Good is our School? School-college Partnership* HMle (2005)
- iii) *Building the Curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching* (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2008)

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### IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

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