

A CURRICULUM MANIFESTO: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE IN LURGAN COLLEGE



" Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

"If you're walking down the right path and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress."

BARACK OBAMA

PREFACE

Over the past 135 years of Lurgan College's illustrious history, successive custodians of the curriculum have sought to ensure that the provision on offer here has been fit to meet the economic, social and political needs of the day. This short booklet deals with just the last five years of that long journey, but it has been a period when the College's motto, *Meliora Sequor*, meaning 'to follow better things', has rarely been more appropriate and, during which, we have striven to provide an education of the highest standards, that prepares the pupils, not only in our school, but those within the wider Craigavon Area Learning Community, for the challenges that will undoubtedly face them in these first few decades of a new millennium. Hopefully you will see that, whether we are dealing with the scope of the curriculum, its delivery, or how it is assessed and reported on, those of us charged with pursuing that vision, have the ability not only to see tomorrow, but to make it happen!

Enjoy!

D.T.A. BELL

*Curriculum Vice Principal,
Lurgan College*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for deciding to read our Manifesto. As you will see, it is a practical document designed to outline the curricular work we do here, as well as giving some appreciation of the values, principles and processes which underpin it. It begins with a look at roles and responsibilities within the curriculum and focuses, in particular, on the functions of the main bodies involved, as well as on what they seek to do and exactly how they go about doing it. This is followed by a section on the Entitlement Framework, looking at what we've done so far and what we would like to do in the future. After this, comes a look at our Assessment Policy, and finally there is a review of some of the initiatives introduced in recent years, and how they have been implemented and evaluated.

2. THE INSTITUTIONS: A CURRICULUM TRINITY

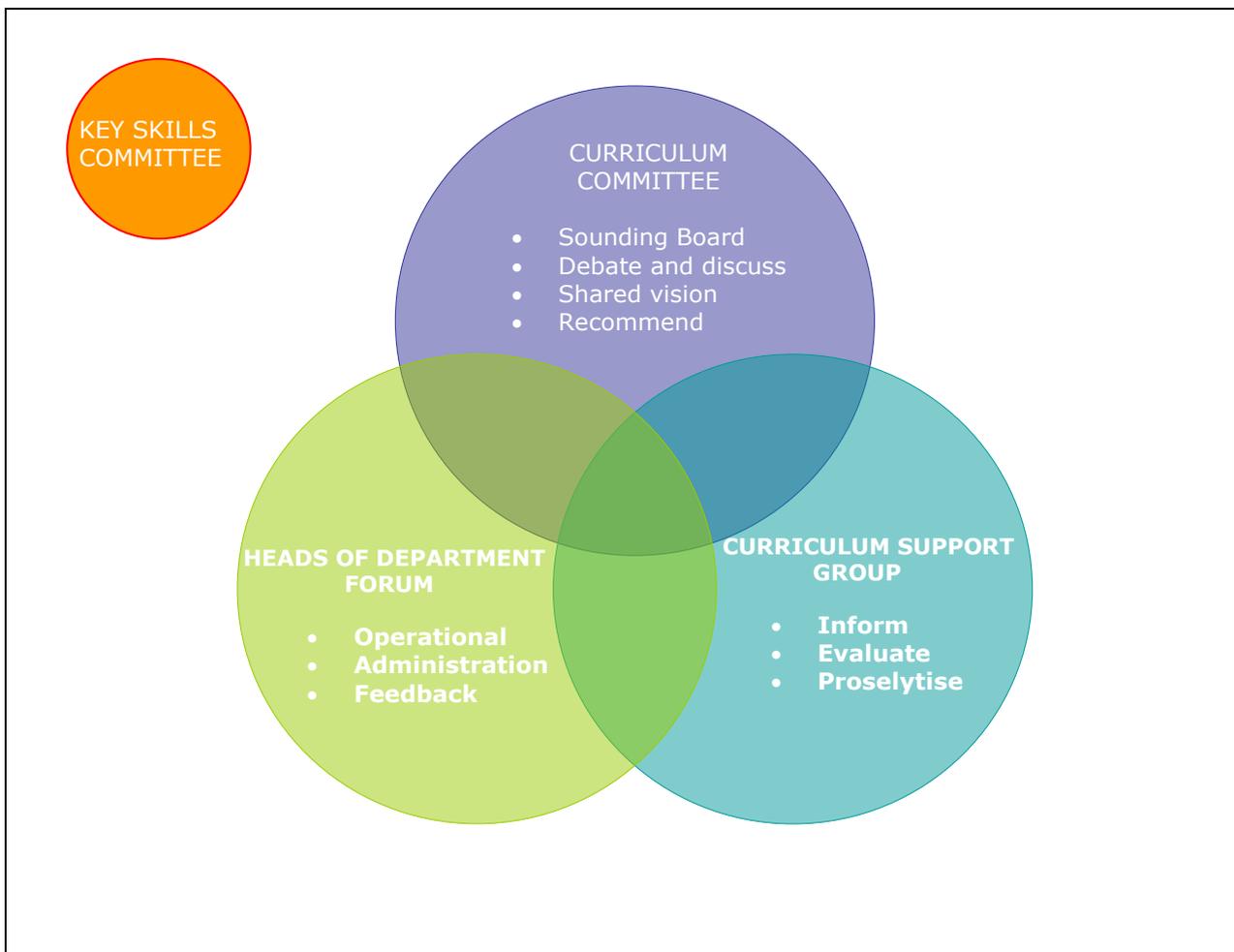


Figure 1 Curriculum bodies in Lurgan College

2.1 AN OVERVIEW

As one would expect, the organisation and curricular structures in Lurgan College have evolved over the years in order to increase the capacity of the school to offer and deliver a curriculum of the highest quality. Today, those structures are perhaps not viewed best in terms of traditional hierarchical and linear notions of order, but are more accurately represented as shown in Figure 1, an organisational structure dominated by three main institutions, one not necessarily more important than the others, and each with its own roles and emphasis, but which, nonetheless, overlap in terms of membership, the issues dealt with, and an underlying philosophy that puts our pupils at the heart of everything we do.

The Trinity mentioned in the sub-title clearly refers to the Curriculum Committee, the Heads of Department Forum, both longstanding institutions, together with the more recently conceived Curriculum Support Group. However, there is also a small satellite body, the Key Skills Committee, which, unlike the others, has a very specific remit linked to one part of the curriculum. In the rest of this section, the roles of each will be examined in more detail.

2.2 THE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

The current incarnation of the Curriculum Committee was convened by the Curriculum Vice Principal, who also leads its work and chairs its meetings, in 2005. Its membership, which was broadened at the time to reflect the new curriculum requirements and also the full scope of the curriculum on offer in the College, is as follows:

- One from Mathematics (Currently Mr Faith);
- One from English (Currently Mrs McDowell);
- One from ICT and Business Studies (Currently Mr Reavie);
- One from Modern Languages (Currently Mr Buttery);
- One from Religious Studies (Currently Mr Irvine – Also Head of Careers);
- One from PE (Currently Mr Hanna);
- One from Geog/Hist/He/Politics (Membership alternated);
- One from Science and Technology (Currently Miss Carberry – Also Academic Tutor);
- One from Art / Music (Currently Mrs Barbour).
- Pastoral Vice Principal (Dr McKee)

As Figure 1 shows, the Committee undertakes a number of useful functions. Perhaps most important, it provides an informed **sounding board** regarding proposals for the way forward in the College and, where possible and appropriate, the Curriculum Vice Principal will circulate a discussion paper ahead of meetings to stimulate thought and provoke debate. Examples include *'The Curriculum Committee: A Discussion Paper'* (Bell, 2005), *'Towards a Sustainable A Level Choice System'* (Bell, 2007) and *'Lurgan College Options Programme: Thoughts Towards A Vision For Its Future Development'* (Bell, 2008). Copies of these are found in Appendix 1, whilst the minutes of the meetings at which they were discussed are found in Appendix 2. The minutes reflect a particularly exciting period of curriculum development in the College, and

issues discussed during this time included the role of the Committee, the future of the Key Stage 4 Choice Structure, the introduction of Learning for Life and Work, the Entitlement Framework, the results of Curriculum Development Surveys, the introduction of a new Post 16 subject choice system, and the revamped Sixth Form Enrichment Programme.

Discussion and debate, therefore, are clearly important in the Committee, and invariably these are pupil centred, insightful and, as one would hope, often passionate. Even a cursory glance over the minutes of the meetings which occurred towards the end of 2005, regarding the introduction of Learning for Life and Work, will leave the reader in no doubt about the depth of engagement with the issues involved (See Appendix 2).

Ideally, the end product of discussion is an **agreed vision** that can be taken forward as a **recommendation to the Senior Leadership Team**.

2.3 THE CURRICULUM SUPPORT GROUP

The Curriculum Support Group was convened by the Curriculum Vice Principal in response to the externally driven Curriculum Leader Team initiative in 2006, designed to assist schools with the implementation of the Revised Curriculum, with Key Stage 3 as its primary focus. In the College, partly because we don't deal directly with Key Stage 3, and partly for micro-political reasons, the Curriculum Leader Team was renamed, and its functions designed to complement those of existing curriculum structures. Teachers were asked to volunteer for the Team, and three were selected in such a way that the Group would have balance, in terms of experience, gender and subject interests. The members are:

- Mr D. Irvine (Currently Head of Religious Studies and Head of Careers);
- Miss. T. Carberry (Currently Head of Biology, Academic Tutor and teacher of LLW);
- Mr G. Caldwell (Teacher of Business Studies, ICT, LLW, Business Enterprise and Careers).

The membership was also designed to overlap with the Curriculum Committee to an extent, but also have at least one member, Mr Caldwell, who was not on both bodies. In this way, liaison between the two would be facilitated, but the Curriculum Support Group would also act an incubator for future Committee members. All three attended all the Curriculum Leader training, often with the Curriculum Vice- Principal also in attendance.

The Curriculum Support Group has three main roles in the College. First, its members are **proselytizers** for change, encouraging new initiatives and developments. They do this in various ways, not least through leadership by example, for all three have volunteered to embrace new initiatives. Mr Irvine, for example, introduced the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness and has overseen a new vision for the Careers Department. Miss Carberry became an LLW teacher and, as Academic Tutor, has also managed the introduction of the College's new electronic reporting system. Mr Caldwell, meanwhile, has introduced the

Certificate of Business Enterprise, volunteered to teach LLW and developed a new Sixth Form Work Experience Programme. In addition, they have given enthusiastic presentations to staff, for example on the Revised Curriculum at Key Stage 3 (Caldwell, Carberry, and Irvine, 2009a), a copy of which can be found in Appendix 3. The timing of this talk was particularly pertinent because it came in May, just months before the first cohort of pupils who had been through the Revised Curriculum would arrive in the College. They have also given presentations outside school, for example at a Curriculum Leader training day (Caldwell, Carberry and Irvine, 2009b), a copy of which can be found in Appendix 4.

Secondly, the Group exists as a body skilled in carrying out **evaluations**, and has, for example, been trained in Action Research. Its first and most notable piece of evaluative work involved the College's AfL initiative in 2006/2007, which will be covered in more detail in Section 5.2. Others, carried out both individually and collectively, have included reviews of Careers provision carried out by Mr Irvine, an example of which is included in Appendix 5 (Irvine, 2010), and a very positive evaluation of the introduction of electronic reporting, conducted by Miss Carberry, which is also contained in Appendix 5 (Carberry 2010a).

Thirdly, the group exists to **inform** the work of both the Curriculum Committee and the SLT.

2.4 THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT FORUM

The work of the Heads of Department Forum is overseen by the Headmaster, who chairs two meetings per year, in January and June (The minutes, taken by the Curriculum Vice Principal, who also provides a curriculum update at each meeting, are available for inspection on request in the Headmaster's Study). It consists of all Heads of Department and Subject Co-ordinators. The Forum generally deals with **operational issues**, such as the timing of exams, study leave and reporting dates, **administrative matters**, such as guidance on the Welcome Booklet, updates to Schemes of Work and Departmental Statements, and **feedback**, for example most recently on the introduction of Controlled Assessment Tasks and the Controlled Assessment Policy.

2.5 THE KEY SKILLS COMMITTEE

The Key Skills Committee was first convened on Wednesday 24th September, 2008, following the introduction of Key Skills (Level 3) qualifications in Communication, Application of Number and ICT, as part of the remodelled Sixth Form Enrichment Programme. Its work is led by the Curriculum Vice Principal, who also chairs its meetings and is the Key Skills Co-ordinator. In addition to the Chairman, the membership currently consists of Mrs Delport (Head of Mathematics), Mrs McDowell (Head of English) and Mr Reavie (Head of Business Studies and ICT). Its role is largely operational, designed to deal with issues relating to the management of the Key Skills, including teaching arrangements, staff development, pupil induction, entry policy and the updating of the Key Skills Policy (Bell,2010). A copy of the most recent version of the Policy can be found in Appendix 6. When more strategic decisions about the future of

Key Skills are required, the Curriculum Vice Principal uses the Committee as a sounding board and, once again, discussion papers are distributed ahead of meetings; one example is *Key Skills in Lurgan College: The Way Forward* (Bell 2009), a copy of which can also be found in Appendix 6.

In 2008, Lurgan College became an Accredited CCEA Key Skills Centre, following the successful submission of a portfolio of evidence by the Curriculum Vice Principal. More recently, in March 2010, the school received its first CCEA monitoring visit, which reached the following conclusion:

There was clear, well organised evidence to demonstrate the excellent practice taking Place in the centre. There was evidence of effective and supportive teamwork and leadership within this teaching environment. The Key Skills Co-ordinator, who is Mr David Bell, Vice Principal for Curriculum is very enthusiastic and this was reflected in the good support given to all students and teachers. (Pollock, 2010)

3. TOWARDS THE ENTITLEMENT FRAMEWORK

3.1 AN OVERVIEW

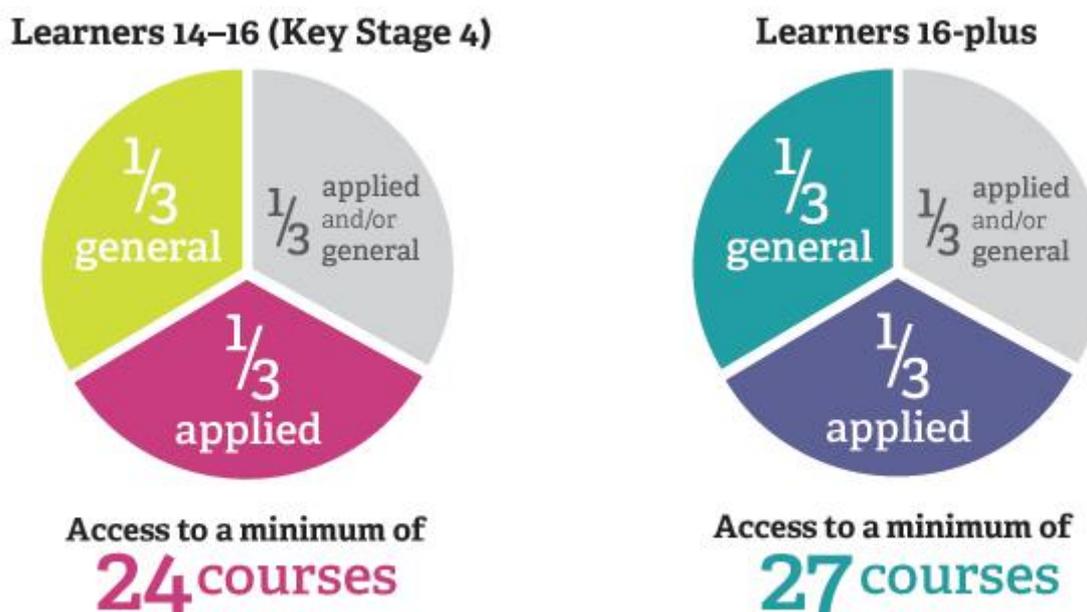


FIGURE 2 THE ENTITLEMENT FRAMEWORK

As Figure 2 shows, by 2013, the Entitlement Framework requires that all schools offer 24 courses at Key Stage 4, at least one third of which should be general and one third applied, and 27 courses at Post 16, again with at least one third general and one third applied. In the rest of this section, there will be a consideration of the principles involved in Lurgan College's approach to curriculum development and then an examination of its progress to date.

3.2 PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

In March 2007, the Curriculum Vice Principal gave a presentation called '*The Entitlement Framework: Planning the Way Forward*' (Bell, 2007), a copy of which may be found in Appendix 7, during which he outlined the principles on which he intended curriculum development to evolve in the College.

The first point concerns the **views of the pupils**; in practice, this has involved carrying out regular questionnaire surveys and conducting interviews. At Post 16 level, two examples of different formats used are included in Appendix 8. It is pleasing to note that the subjects most requested in the curriculum questionnaire carried out in 2007 – Health and Social Care, Physical Education, Psychology and Travel and Tourism – are all now on offer in the College. At Key Stage 4 level, surveys are carried out with existing pupils, and these are supplemented by annual interviews carried out in May, with pupils at Lurgan Junior High School and their parents. Feedback is also gained from Mrs Henderson, the Careers teacher in Lurgan Junior High School and Mrs Joanne Fitzgerald, the DEL Careers Advisor in both schools. There are also opportunities to gain feedback from the parents of prospective pupils at the annual

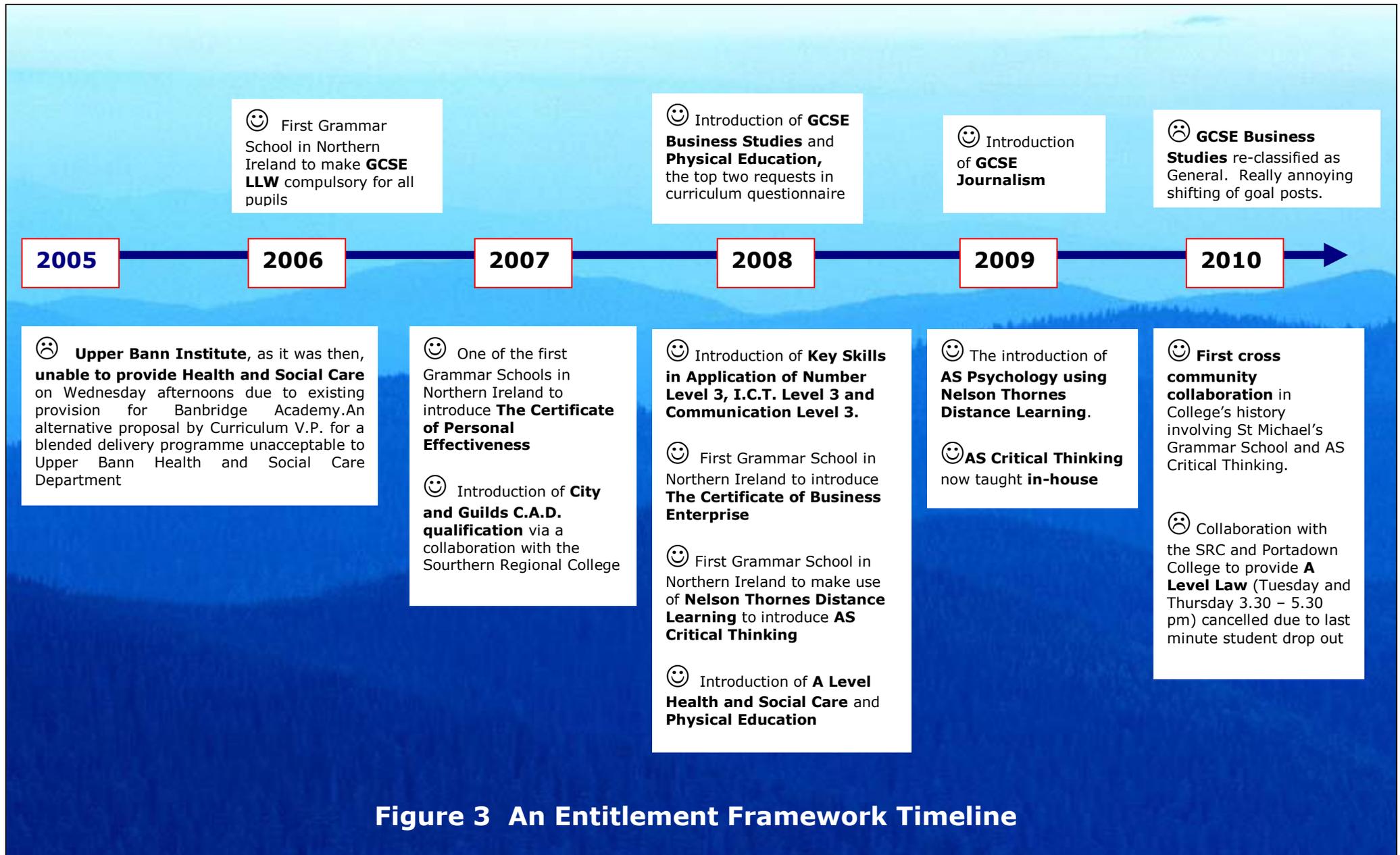
information evening in Lurgan Junior High School in October, during which the Curriculum Vice Principal gives a short presentation on the curriculum on offer in the College.

Secondly, **the professional expertise of teachers and other relevant professionals**, both inside and outside the College, are taken into consideration. Inside, this will be obvious from the minutes of the Curriculum Committee meetings referred to earlier, whilst teachers have also had an input via bilateral discussions with the Curriculum Vice Principal. Outside, the process has also been informed by consultation with other schools, both at Principal and Vice Principal Level. The Headmaster, for example, regularly meets with his counterparts at meetings of the Craigavon Area Learning Community, whilst the Curriculum Vice Principal, who is also the school's Entitlement Framework Officer, liaises bilaterally with the Vice Principals of St Michael's Grammar School, Portadown College, Brownlow Integrated College and Lismore Comprehensive, all of which, for example, he involved in attempts to establish a twilight course in Law, to be taken in Lurgan College and delivered by a S.R.C. lecturer during the 2010/2011 academic year (Unfortunately, although populated with potential pupils from Portadown College and Lurgan College, this class did not materialise due to student withdrawals). Other important and much used contacts include Aiden McCormack, a C2K advisor and Entitlement Framework Officer, David Vint (SRC), Joanne Fitzgerald (DEL), Joe Doherty (ASDAN), Anne Marie Duffy (CCEA), Debbie Cramphorn (Nelson Thornes Distance Learning) and CASS subject advisors.

Thirdly, there is a need to engage in **a process that is sustainable**, so that sufficient pupil numbers are maintained across the full range of subjects; our approach, in fact, is perhaps best summed up by a desire to see the school exist in a state of **dynamic equilibrium**, one where we are excited at the prospect of change, but also aware of the need to maintain a sense of balance. This can be done in a number of ways, for example back in 2007, questionnaire surveys containing several subject choice scenarios, were used to gauge the potential impact of GCSE Business Studies and Physical Education. Attempts such as this, to maintain balance, may be seen as **negative feedback mechanisms**, designed to ensure that change does not destabilise the wider school system (Copies of the Questionnaires may be viewed in Appendix 8). A similar exercise was also carried out before the introduction of A Level Health and Social Care and Physical Education (Also see Appendix 8).

Fourthly, there has been an awareness of the need to consider **competition from neighbouring schools**, especially Banbridge Academy, Friends' School, Lisburn and Wallace High School, and our ability to compete for pupils, especially those of the highest quality.

Last, and most important of all, because at its core lies the principle that *all* children have a right to a curriculum that enables them to reach their full potential, is, of course, **the Entitlement Framework**.



3.3 THE JOURNEY SO FAR

As Figure 3 shows, the journey towards the Entitlement Framework has not been a smooth one; indeed, its mountainous backdrop provides an appropriate visual metaphor for the ups and downs experienced along the way. However, problems have often been met by creative solutions, for example the introduction of LLW involved a blended delivery approach, involving formal and supplementary curriculum time, the latter including days when the normal Year 11 timetable is suspended and given over to LLW Controlled Assessment or enrichment activities, such as the Love For Life presentation. The College was also one of the first Grammar schools in Northern Ireland to make use of Nelson Thornes, Video Conferenced Distance Learning. AS level Critical Thinking, meanwhile, has involved combining a weekly one hour whole class session, also attended by students from St Michael's Grammar School, with small group tutorials, both very much akin to a university experience. Other collaborations, for example, with the SRC, have also made a contribution, and will do so much more in future.

Figure 3 and Table 1 show that, at **Post 16**, the number of general courses has increased significantly. **20 General Subjects** are now on offer, although German and Spanish are available only in alternate years, mirroring the provision in Lurgan Junior High School, along with **10 Applied Courses** (This includes A2 Psychology, which is applied at A2 Level, but General at AS).

GENERAL COURSES	APPLIED COURSES
Art A Level Biology A Level Business Studies A Level Chemistry A Level Critical Thinking AS Level (Collaboration with St Michael's Grammar School) English Literature A Level French A Level Geography A Level German A Level (Alternate years) Government and Politics A Level History Home Economics A Level Law A Level (Offered with SRC, but not run) Mathematics A Level Music A Level Physics A Level Physical Education A Level Psychology (AS Level) Religious Studies A Level Spanish A Level (Alternate years)	Certificate of Personal Effectiveness Level 3 Certificate of Business Enterprise Level 3 Health and Social Care A Level ICT A Level Key Skill Application of Number Level 3 Key Skill Communication Level 3 Key Skill ICT Level 3 Psychology A2 Level (Collaboration with Nelson Thornes Distance Learning) Technology A Level Travel and Tourism AS level

Table 1 Post 16 Course offer in Lurgan College (2010/2011)

For the **2011/12 academic year**, pupils are to be consulted on the introduction of further qualifications, including A Levels in Accounting (Applied), Sociology (General) and Law (General), all offered in **collaboration with the SRC**, most likely on a twilight basis in the College on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, as well as AS Electronics (Applied) and AS Film Studies (Applied) offered in **collaboration with Nelson Thornes Distance Learning**. The Curriculum Vice Principal also intends to examine the value of **expanding the Enrichment Programme to include Level 3 Qualifications in the three Wider Key Skills**.

At **Key Stage 4**, as Table 2 shows, there are currently 22 courses on offer. There are **18 general GCSEs**, although, once again, Spanish and German are offered on alternate years, together with **4 Applied GCSE courses**, although it is hoped that the recent, and totally disheartening, re-classification of GCSE Business Studies as a General Subject can be reversed.

GENERAL COURSES (ALL GCSEs)	APPLIED COURSES (ALL GCSEs)
Additional Mathematics Art Biology Business Studies Chemistry English English Literature French Geography German (Alternate years) History Home Economics Mathematics Music Physical Education Physics Religious Studies Spanish (Alternate years)	I.C.T. Journalism Learning for Life and Work Technology

Table 2 Course offer in Lurgan College 2010/2011

The College is committed to introducing further applied courses by 2013, and has been actively considering, through meetings with other schools and the SRC, the introduction of the following qualifications:

- **BTEC Level 2 Qualifications** (Either Extended or Standard Certificates), for example in Travel and Tourism and Health and Social Care, in collaboration with the SRC. Two models are currently being considered, one incorporating BTECs into the existing timetable, and

the other a twilight offer involving quite an extensive menu of courses provided to a range of schools, by the SRC (Currently being worked on by the Principals in the Craigavon Area Learning Community);

- **ASDAN's Certificate of Career Planning;**
- **GCSEs** in Health and Social Care, Applied Science, Land Based Science, and Astronomy offered in-house.

3.4 A MORE DETAILED CURRICULUM STATEMENT 2010/2011

3.4.1 KEY STAGE 4

Intake for September 2010 will be 117, two more than usual following successful admissions appeals. All Key Stage 4 pupils are required to study 10 or 11 subjects to GCSE Level, usually at the higher levels. These include the following compulsory choices:

- Mathematics;
- English and English Literature /Journalism;
- Learning for Life and Work;
- Religious Education;
- One from History or Geography or Home Economics;
- One from French or German / Spanish;
- One science subject (From Chemistry, Physics or Biology).

Pupils are then able to choose a further two subjects from the full range available (See Table 2). In addition to these GCSE subjects, all pupils in Year 11 will take compulsory PE/Games. The time allocation is as follows (Note: There are forty five, 35 minute periods in the week):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| • Mathematics | 5 periods (7 for those taking Add Maths) |
| • English and English Lit/Journalism | 6 periods |
| • Religious Education | 4 periods (2 periods of core time plus Supplementary, on request, time for those taking Add Maths) |
| • LLW | 2 periods of core time in Year 11, 1 period in Year 12, plus supplementary time |
| • Other GCSE Subjects | 5 periods |
| • Careers Education | 1 period in Year 12 |
| • Games/PE | 3 periods |

All pupils sit their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 12, with the exception of Mathematics, in which pupils sit one unit at the end of Year 11.

3.4.2 POST 16 CURRICULUM

Pupils who obtain suitable GCSE passes will be promoted into the Sixth Form. In Year 13, all students study four AS Levels from those shown in Table 1, although a small number of pupils, who study Critical Thinking as part of the Enrichment Programme, will study five. All AS subjects, with the exception of Critical Thinking, have at least seven periods per week, although a minority of classes have eight, as teachers may organise an extra period in consultation with the Curriculum Vice Principal, who is able to guide them on the potential for extra classes. In addition, all pupils, room permitting, are expected to have two periods of Private Study per subject.

In Year 14, the vast majority of students study 3 subjects to A2 level, although a very small minority will study 4 subjects to A2 Level, or 2 subjects to A2 Level and 2 AS Levels. All Year 14 classes have 8 periods per week as well as 2 periods of Private Study per subject, again space permitting.

Regarding subject choices, the College operates a two stage subject choice system with Year 12 pupils choosing their three main subjects shortly after the mock examinations and then making their final choices following the GCSE examinations in June (A detailed explanation and rationale for the Subject Choice System is available in Appendix 9).

Over the course of the two years, all pupils have access to 1 period per week of Physical Education, 2 periods of Games and 1 Careers Education period.

Pupils also have opportunities to avail of the College's Sixth Form Enrichment Programme, born out of the old Options Programme in 2008. This allows students to choose from two broad types of courses:

- The first are non-exam, or uncertificated classes which, amongst other things, provide pupils with a relaxing *alternative* to the academic diet we have on offer here. Typically, these include video editing, recycling, school magazine, Spin, cross stitch, origami, Dreamweaver, school website, book clubs, Adobe Photoshop and badminton;
- The second type aims to *supplement* that academic diet with a range of certificated courses that lead to qualifications, *but*, which have a much greater emphasis on evidence/portfolio based assessment and independent learning, and include Key Skills (One or two periods per week, depending on proxies), CoPe (Two periods per week), the Certificate of Business Enterprise (Two periods per week), AS Critical Thinking (Two periods per week plus supplementary tutorial time) and City and Guilds Computer Aided Design (Offered on Wednesday afternoon from 2.20pm to 4.40pm – from 2010 onwards this will be offered in alternate years).

4. ASSESSMENT POLICY

4.1 AIMS

Lurgan College believes that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and an important element in the professional responsibility of teachers. The main aims are listed below:

- Assessment should help pupils to develop fully their academic abilities and self-confidence, to develop skills which they need for reflective and independent study and to establish shared understanding by pupils and teachers of clear and explicit study goals;
- Assessment, both formal and informal, should complement and reinforce the delivery of the curriculum. It should enable the learning needs of individual pupils to be identified and allow future teaching strategies to be determined;
- Assessment should recognise individual progress and achievement and provide pupils with meaningful information which will allow them to participate in self-evaluation;
- Assessment should involve a range of techniques, both formal and informal, carried out in a variety of contexts which will allow individual pupils to show what they know, understand and can do;
- Assessment and reporting are an integral part of the link between the school and parents, and should provide parents with meaningful information.

4.2 METHODS AND RANGE OF ASSESSMENT

4.2.1 OVERVIEW

A wide variety of assessment methods are used in school, including **formal assessment** by examination (public and internal), through coursework/controlled assessment, homework, practical work, oral work and class tests. Teachers are also involved in the **continuous assessment** of pupils' work during class activities, monitoring not only academic attainment but other skills such as co-operation and teamwork. These skills are also assessed in an informal way through the programme of extra-curricular activities.

4.2.2 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Summative assessment, or the assessment *of* learning, used mainly to measure performance, clearly identifies the standard of a pupil's attainment, and is carried out at the end of a period of learning. The main examples are formal measures of assessment including public and internal examinations (See Table 3) and end of topic tests.

INTERNAL EXAMINATIONS	PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS
Year 11 January and June	Year 11 GCSE Unit in Mathematics
Year 12 January	Year 12 GCSE Examinations in May/June
Year 13 January	Year 13 AS Examinations in May/June
Year 14 November	Year 14 AS/A2 Examinations in Jan & May/ June

Table 3 Internal and External Examinations

However, it also involves **portfolios of evidence** (for example in Key Skills, CoPE and the Certificate of Business Enterprise), **coursework/ controlled assessment**, which are used to assess those aspects of a subject which cannot be readily assessed by an external examination. More information on how Controlled Assessment operates in the College can be found in the College's **Controlled Assessment Policy** (Bell, 2011a), a copy of which is available in Appendix 10. There is also a Guide Controlled Assessment for Parents (Bell, 2011b), including a Yearly Planner available on the school website and a **Coursework / Internal Appeals policy** available on request.

4.2.3 ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Assessment *for* Learning (also known as Formative Assessment) has been a major feature of the Revised Curriculum in general, and the development of teaching and learning in the College in particular, in recent years (See Section 5.1 for further details). It may be defined as the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. More specifically, departments in the College, through PRSD, staff development (both external and in-house), shared good practice seminars and meetings of the Heads of Department Forum, have been encouraged to engage in the following elements:

- Sharing learning objectives with pupils;
- Effective questioning;
- Sharing Success Criteria;
- Effective feedback, including marking for improvement;
- Self and peer evaluation.

4.2.4 HOMEWORK

Good practice is promoted through homework, which is set regularly across all departments according to:

- The needs of the pupils;
- The differing demands of each GCSE subject and the associated coursework/controlled assessment requirements;
- The context of agreed departmental policies.

All departments, where appropriate, make use of the AfL principles stated above in relation to homeworks. They also encourage pupils to make use of Homework Diaries. In Sixth Form, pupils are encouraged to take much more responsibility for their own learning, partly as a preparation for future life at university, and homework may be linked to individual research, the use of departmental/Library resources, Private Study classes, preparation and planning. Pupils are encouraged to use appropriate ICT skills to research and present their homework.

4.3 REPORTING

Reporting, which is carried out electronically through the SIMS System, will be based on assessment of individual pupil performance and involves two main types:

- **Examination reports** on pupils will be issued to parents following each internal examination (See Table 3 above). These reports include grade and class place, along with a teacher comment. There will also be a House Teacher's pastoral report and a Headmaster's comment;
- **Progress Reports** are issued three times per year, twice in the Autumn Term and once in the Summer Term. These have a grade for both effort and achievement from each teacher and a House Teacher's Academic Comment.

Guidance on reporting has been provided by the College's Academic Tutor, Miss Carberry, including help-sheets on standardization / proof reading, grade boundaries and technical advice on accessing reports (Carberry 2010b, 2010c, 2010c and 2010e), all available on the RM Staff Section of SIMS.

The school holds Parents' Evenings, when parents are invited to discuss their child's performance and achievements with individual subject teachers. These are held in November (Year 14) and February/ March (Year 11-13). Parents may contact the school at any time to make an appointment to see any member of staff.

Finally, **Progress Files**, produced in line with statutory guidance, are presented to pupils at Speech Day in the Autumn term.

4.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor and evaluate the Assessment Policy in line with school practice. The policy is updated by the Curriculum Vice Principal.

The Academic Tutor has responsibility for:

- Administering the electronic reporting system (with the kind assistance of Mr Patterson who volunteered to help);
- Monitoring the progress of pupils throughout the year, and liaising closely with pupils, parents, subject teachers, Year Teachers and senior members of staff, regarding pupils who are underperforming;
- Putting in place appropriate strategies (including daily and weekly report) where pupils are identified as underperforming.

Heads of Department/Subject Co-ordinators are to:

- Oversee the monitoring of progress of pupils in their subject and liaise with pupils, parents, the Academic Tutor and Year Teachers, offering subject-specific support where necessary;

- Apply and embed the principles of the School Assessment Policy within their own departmental practice;
- Formulate and maintain a departmental policy on Assessment (for example, methods and frequency of testing, departmental homework policy, the marking of pupils' work, recording of pupils' results and the use of Assessment for Learning strategies), which should involve reference to the whole school policy;
- Liaise with the Examinations Officer and Assistant Examinations Officer regarding all aspects of the management of public examinations;
- Organise the internal formal assessment of their subject regarding the setting of examinations for internal examinations;
- Monitor and evaluate agreed schemes of work and teaching strategies in the light of assessment outcomes, including internal value added data and information from DENI and CCEA;
- Be responsible for departmental record keeping.

Subject Teachers are to:

- Monitor the progress of pupils in their subject and liaise with the Head of Department, pupils, parents, the Academic Tutor and Year Teachers, offering subject-specific support where necessary;
- Implement departmental/whole school policies on Assessment;
- Mark in accordance with departmental policy;
- Mark and comment on all assessment tasks in a positive, meaningful and diagnostic manner, returning assessment tasks to pupils in an appropriate period of time.

The Examinations Officer (Also Pastoral Vice Principal) will liaise with appropriate staff/pupils/parents/exam boards regarding all aspects of public examinations. She will also liaise with the Assistant Examinations Officer regarding certain duties.

The Assistant Examinations Officer (Also a Senior Leader) will liaise with appropriate staff/pupils/parents regarding the overseeing of the internal examinations, including timetable and supervision rota. She will also assist with certain aspects of external examinations in agreement with the Examinations Officer.

4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Clearly, assessment makes an invaluable contribution to teaching and learning in Lurgan College, and hopefully this policy has provided a reasonable overview of principle and practice as they stand at present; however, as stated in Section 3, the College exists in a state of dynamic equilibrium and undoubtedly there will be interesting developments ahead.

5. SELF EVALUATION IN LURGAN COLLEGE

5.1 THOUGHTS TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

Up until this point, the emphasis has been very much on the curriculum on offer. This section aims to look more at the initiatives designed to impact on **delivery of the curriculum** in the classroom and, importantly, how these have been evaluated. Although the methodology for self evaluation has undoubtedly become more thoroughgoing in the last five years, the idea of self evaluation in the College is certainly not something new. Indeed, the Curriculum Vice Principal went some way towards forming an ideological framework for the College approach, as part of a presentation to staff in October of 2006 (Bell, 2006a), when he outlined 'The Lurgan College Self Improvement Model', is shown in Figure 4.

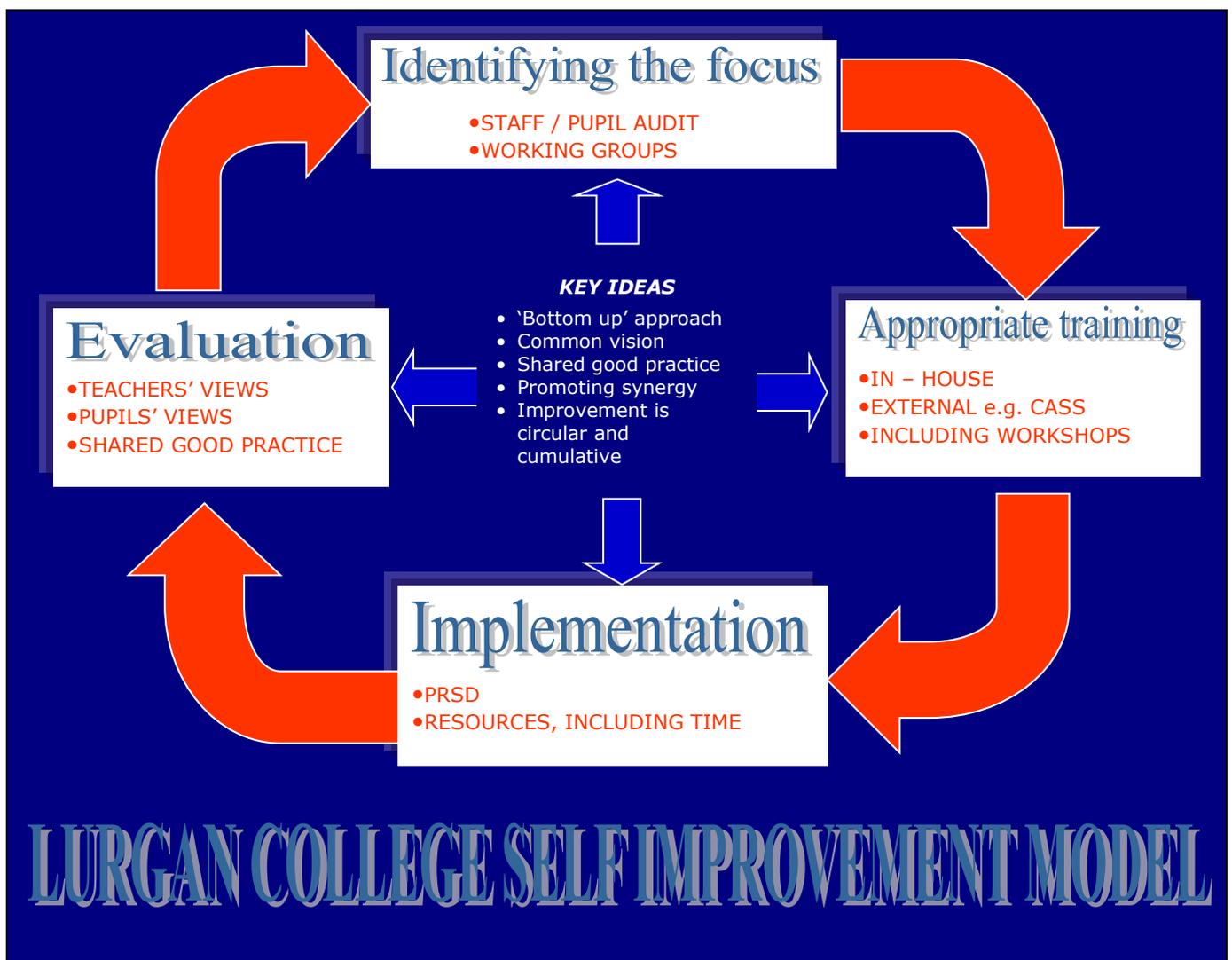


Figure 4

The model is largely self explanatory and, broadly speaking, is as applicable to our practice today as it was four years ago; one possible amendment would be the addition of capacity building and the role of distributive leadership as key ideas underpinning our approach. In the rest of this section, a number of case studies will illustrate the relevance of the model to teaching and learning initiatives and their evaluation.

5.2 CASE STUDY 1: ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Assessment for Learning has been a recurring theme in the College over the past few years. It was brought to the SLT's attention by the staff as a possible focus in the Autumn of 2005, following a **whole school consultation exercise**, in preparation for the **formulation of a new School Development Plan**. Subsequently, **training** was put in place and carried out in-house by the **Curriculum Vice Principal**, during a Staff Development Day in May 2006. The training took the form of a series of short presentations interspersed with workshops, which involved groups working together in departments or related areas to plan a lesson based on AfL principles. The workshops encouraged collaborative approaches to planning within departments, and the outcomes were collated, photocopied and distributed to all staff as a means of **sharing good practice**. The Assessment for Learning Pack used on the day, including Powerpoint presentations, notes and workshop activities, together with the completed lesson plans are all available in Appendix 11 (Bell, 2006b).

To provide further impetus, **AfL was made a PRSD focus** which also, of course, acted as a means of evaluation. The *main evaluation*, however, was carried out by the **Curriculum Support Group**. Initial draft questionnaires had been drawn up by the Headmaster, Curriculum Vice Principal and Pastoral Vice Principal during a residential leadership conference in Enniskillen, and were informed by training received on the **EFQM** evaluation model. Copies of these were provided for the Curriculum Support Group and agreed amendments made where they saw fit. **Questionnaire surveys** were carried out with both staff and pupils, with a **report back in June 2007**; this was accompanied by a **Shared Good Practice Seminar**, during which a number of members of staff shared ideas they had used during the year. The **evaluation** (See Caldwell, Carberry and Irvine, 2007) which, along with all the materials used, is contained in Appendix 12, **was largely positive**, and exceeded targets, but it was felt that another year would help to further embed the principles of AfL, and so it remained a focus for a second cycle. At the end of that year, an evaluation was carried out using more qualitative methods, mainly interviews with staff and pupils conducted by the Curriculum Vice Principal. The feedback from these was also positive and the SLT decided to move to another focus.

Two years passed, with ICT -related foci dominating PRSD before, in **2009**, another **staff consultation** was held in preparation for another new School Development Plan. This time pupil **oracy** was highlighted as a particular concern, and it was suggested that an emphasis on **higher level questioning techniques** would be fruitful; another cycle had begun! This time, training was sourced both in-house and externally. Regarding the former, the Senior Leader responsible for Staff Development conducted an AfL Questioning workshop (Hamill 2010), whilst Kate O'Hanlon provided the externally sourced training (O'Hanlon, 2010). Materials used by both may be viewed on the excellent Lurgan College Staff Development website: www.lurgancollege.co.uk/staffdevelopment. Once again, pupil oracy and questioning have become the **focus for this year's PRSD cycle**, and will be evaluated in line with previous practice at the end of the year.

5.3 CASE STUDY 2: THE PROMOTION OF CREATIVE ICT APPLICATIONS

The **2008/2009** academic year saw a whole school focus on the **creative use of ICT** in the school, a development partly driven by responses to the Staff Development Audit, but mainly by a wave of innovative ICT developments that had been taking place naturally in the College, and which had created a palpable 'buzz' in the staffroom (and amongst the pupils), with conversations sprinkled with exotic sounding wikis, Yacapaca and Splashcast causing intrigue, and arousing a curiosity that created its own momentum for progress; it was a mood that **Mr Reavie, our ICT Co-ordinator**, was keen to exploit!

Following discussion, the **creative use of ICT was announced as our PRSD focus**, which would give structure and coherence to its development. As ever, there was a comprehensive programme of staff development put in place, which sought to harness the good practice that already existed in the College, whilst combining it with the fresh perspectives of external trainers. A **two day programme of staff development** occurred on the 2nd and 3rd of December, 2008 and involved **two Board Officers**, Ciaran McCrumlish and Aidan McCanny who, along with **Mr Reavie**, gave presentations on a wide variety of ICT applications, and delivered workshops on podcasts, wikis and Yacapaca tests. The workshops were invaluable for a number of reasons, not least because they were organised on a subject basis, allowing for the sorts of **collaborative approaches to Departmental work** initiated by the Curriculum Vice Principal in Assessment for Learning and described above. Teachers from a wide range of Departments, including Politics, Business Studies, ICT, Music, History, Physics and Geography, then provided insights into their experiences with creative ICT applications so far. A more detailed overview of the training is provided by Mr Reavie's introductory powerpoint presentation, *Creative Use of ICT in Lurgan College* (Reavie 2008), used at the start of the training days, a copy of which may be found in Appendix 13.

Significantly, **Mr Hamill, Senior Leader in charge of Staff Development**, carried out a **qualitative evaluation** of the training almost immediately afterwards, and the **very positive findings** can be found in his *Summary of ICT Staff Development training* (Hamill, 2008) document in Appendix 14, and also on the Staff Development website. Tellingly, this included the views of Ciaran McCrumlish, whose enthusiastic response was that **Lurgan College was 'well ahead of the game'** and that he was **'blown away' with the extent of the use of ICT to improve learning across the school**; so much so, in fact, that he stated his intention to recommend the College for future ICT pilot schemes, which would attract further resources and training. Once again the potential for improvement that would be circular and cumulative was apparent. Mr Hamill's survey also made useful suggestions regarding the way ahead in this area. At the end of the year, meanwhile, the **initiative as a whole was evaluated** both quantitatively and qualitatively by **Mr Reavie**, using Survey Monkey, and this proved, if anything, **even more positive** (See Appendix 15 for details).

5.4 CASE STUDY 3: THE INTRODUCTION OF INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARDS

The use of **I.W.B.s** has had a significant impact on teaching and learning in Lurgan College since they were **installed in Spring 2009**, as part of an ongoing investment programme in ICT. Once again, the views of staff, and Heads of Department in particular, were influential in instigating this development, partly expressed through **annual departmental review meetings with the Headmaster**, and partly as a result of bilateral discussions with Mr Reavie.

Once the I.W.B.s were installed, a **comprehensive training programme** was put in place involving mainly internal staff, although during a Staff Development Day held on 29 May, 2009, Ciaran McCrumlish, a CASS advisor, *did* reprise a presentation (McCrumlish, 2009) he had given to Craigavon Senior High School earlier in the year (A copy of this may be found on the Staff Development Website). The **vast majority of the training, however, was planned and delivered in-house by Mr Reavie**, via workshop sessions held during the May training day and at others, for example August 2010, with the aid of a variety of resources including *Getting the Most From Your Interactive WhiteBoard* (B.E.C.T.A, 2009), *Interactive Whiteboard Training Index* (Reavie, 2009a), *IWB In Subjects* (Reavie, 2009b) and *Useful Tips for the IWB in Teaching and Learning* (Reavie, 2009c). Samples of these are available in Appendix 16 and on the Staff Development Website. Shortly after the initial training, **shared good practice** also aided the momentum of the initiative, as Mr Reavie disseminated examples of ideas emailed to him by members of staff in his *Resources Produced Or Underway* document (Reavie, 2009d).

Evaluation also once again followed a familiar pattern, partly achieved via the **PRSD process**, but also through **qualitative surveys** carried out with pupils and teachers, involving the pioneering use of **online tools, including Google Docs**. The results were presented to the staff, using power point presentations, including *A Review of the use of Interactive Whiteboards in Lurgan College 2009/2010* (Reavie, 2010) a copy of which can be found in Appendix 17. The **findings of the teacher survey were generally positive**, for example the vast majority of teachers reported that IWBs had:

- Improved pupil motivation, including willingness to answer questions, general engagement and improved attention;
- Encouraged a wider range of teaching and learning strategies;
- Impacted on oracy, with 40% noting a significant improvement and only 20% saying that other strategies, for example AfL, had been more significant.

The sample of **pupils** surveyed, again using Google Docs, confirmed the **positive impact** on learning, for example in terms of participation in class (A Sample pupil survey may be viewed in Appendix 18). Mr Reavie also identified further training needs so that the cycle of improvement might continue, for although not identified as a PRSD priority for 2010/2011, workshop based staff development has continued to inform staff's use of these valuable resources.

6. CONCLUSION

The beginning of this booklet promised a lot, and hopefully, having made it this far, you have not been disappointed. Leadership, management and hard work at all levels, and involving all the staff, have helped to facilitate the significant progress that has occurred over the past five years and, it is hoped, amply illustrates Vaclav Havel's assertion that:

Vision alone is not enough; it must be combined with venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps; one must also step up the stairs.

However, the journey is ongoing – no good school will ever rest on its laurels - and undoubtedly there are exciting times ahead; further progress, for example will be made in the curriculum offer, especially as 2013 beckons, with redoubled efforts to collaborate with our partners in the Craigavon Area Learning Community to ensure that we meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. The delivery of the curriculum will also continue to evolve, with its emphasis on facilitating pupils' learning, whilst the reporting of pupils' progress, involving the SIMS electronic reporting system will continue to roll out, to include all reports in the College. A plan to implement a more rigorous process of pupil tracking and target setting using CATS is in place, beginning with a pilot scheme this year, and which promises to herald an era when an increasingly individualised and bespoke education is provided for all our pupils. The journey, in fact, may well be turning into an adventure!

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