

Skills for Work CASE STUDY

Rural Skills Intermediate One

Nairn Academy, in partnership with Green's Nurseries, Skenepark Small Pets, Nairn Dunbar Golf Club and a range of other local employers has successfully participated in the pilot and is building on a positive first year's experience.

Rationale

Nairn Academy identified in the Skills for Work Course, an opportunity to widen the existing curriculum and better serve the needs of pupils.

The aims of the course reflect the philosophy of Curriculum for Excellence. It was felt that it would bring considerable benefits to the pupils involved, the school and the wider community.



Partnership Arrangements

The school benefited from a strong relationship with local employers, already used extensively for work experience placement. It was a natural progression to invite Green's Nurseries, Skenepark Small Pets and Nairn Dunbar Golf Course to assist with delivery of the Course Units.

In addition, pupils have opportunity for placements with a local garage, a playschool and an hotel, to increase experience and employability skills.

Full partnership agreements are in place between the school, the local authority and all partners in respect of the delivery of the Rural Skills Course pilot.

Communication between the school and partners is very good, with weekly contact between the lead teacher and partner staff, as well as regular meetings for the purposes of planning and evaluation.

“When I first started I was pretty shy and didn't like speaking to people I didn't know, but now I am more comfortable speaking to people.”

View from candidate

Delivery Approaches

A generous allocation of time in the S3/S4 timetable means that pupils are able to cover both horticulture and animal husbandry options, as well as the core Units.

The pupils (6 boys and 6 girls) started with a two full day induction with visits to all partners a key part of the process.

Rural Skills are delivered on a Friday, mornings for partner placements, and afternoons for school based work.

The school minibus is utilised for employer visits with two pupils attending each site. It is felt that this arrangement gives greater focus and practical involvement than would be the case with larger groups. Partner employers are responsible for providing appropriate workplace activities and, for assessments using NAB materials, in association with the lead teacher.

The Friday afternoon session is a valuable one. It enables pupils to work on the research element of the Land-based Industries Unit, to utilise the excellent SFEU support materials and to reinforce their learning experiences.



Employability Skills

Full integration of the Employability Skills Unit is very much part of the partner placement arrangements. The discipline of the workplace is emphasised at all times. This includes good time keeping, awareness of Health and Safety, co-operative working and following instructions.

An interesting extra component has been added by the school in the form of a six week block Course delivered right at the beginning of the course by the owner of a local hotel. During this intensive introductory period generic employability skills ranging from interviews to the importance of appearance are put into practice effectively.

Centre Evaluation

Evaluation of the pilot has been crucial, and has taken place at both formal and informal levels. Pupils have been invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire designed to give them the opportunity to provide feedback on their feelings about the course. Parents too have been involved. Their views have uniformly been enthusiastic. Within the school, the feedback derived from this process and from partner meetings is being used to plan ahead.

Future Delivery Plans

In view of the success of the pilot, it is intended to continue partnership working in the delivery of Rural Skills, and to introduce other Skills for Work Courses to suit the needs of pupils. It is planned to extend the range of partners to include, among others, Moray and Inverness Colleges.

Advice

The pilot has shown that Skills for Work Courses can be a valuable addition to school curricula. It is clear that they will be successful where, as at Nairn, there is a high degree of support from school management and also from the local authority.

Preparation and planning well in advance of starting the course are crucial in ensuring that all involved, from timetablers to teachers, and partners to pupils, are fully aware of their role. Nairn Academy found that the experience and advice of SQA staff was of considerable assistance.

“My son is very positive about what he is doing.”

Quote from a Parent