

# What difference has being an SCQF Ambassador School made to our pupils in Galashiels Academy?

By Pauline Anderson, Depute Head Teacher, Galashiels Academy



Being an SCQF Ambassador School has allowed us to expand our curriculum offer in the Senior Phase and develop a curriculum that meets the needs of our pupils.

Our journey started by training all our Principal Teachers and Senior Leadership Team on the SCQF framework and raising awareness by using the resources at Parent information evenings. Now we have an SCQF day, SCQF/Gala Skills Ambassadors in Primary 7, S1 and S6 and a staff, pupil and community working group that drives forward change. Working in collaboration with Borders College, TD1 Youth Hub, Works + and Community Learning and Development (CLD) we have introduced many new courses, stretching to Level 7 in the SCQF framework and we are continuing to improve our offer every session.

There are so many exciting things that I want to share with you but for this first post, I will share three examples from our S4 group who are benefitting from our school being an SCQF Ambassador School.



**Spark programme** is a pilot project working with a target group of S4 pupils over 3 months, designed by TD1 Youth Hub and Works+ in partnership with our school, to work closely with participants to help them achieve a minimum of 5 SCQF Level 5 qualifications. The programme is split into 3 parts:

1. One whole week of intensive work developing the Gala Skills with an afternoon focusing on softer skills outwith their comfort zones.
2. Weekly mentoring following the Steps to Success programme, developing targets and supporting pupils to achieve their targets.
3. Monthly gatherings to catch up and develop an entrepreneurial idea or become involved in another project working with the community.

Participation in this programme means pupils like Oscar will achieve a Dynamic Youth Award, Saltire Volunteering award and work towards a Youth Achievement Award.

**Oscar says:** *“This project has already got me to engage with school a bit more. It gives me more SCQF points and an added bonus is I get help with subjects if I need it. This week, I start my mentoring with Doug, and he will make sure I am keeping up with the work for the 6 Nat 5s that I am studying. In the first part of the programme, the activities in the afternoon were great and I developed my teamwork skills. I really enjoyed the computer programming in the morning. Next year I want to get some Highers then leave after S5 to work and then join the Army when I am a bit older. I think being an SCQF Ambassador School will help me on this journey.”*

**Borders College** offer many courses to enhance the SCQF offer in our school. Many of our S4 pupils attend Borders College School Academy on a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon to achieve another SCQF Level 4 or 5 qualification. There is also a group of 5 boys who attend college on a Thursday morning for a different level 4 qualification. Kairo is one of these pupils who follows a blended timetable with Borders College and school. On Thursday mornings he attends Greenpower which is an SCQF Level 4 Engineering course. On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons he attends Borders College School Academy to study Level 4 Construction Crafts.

At school he is studying National 4 Applications of Mathematics, National 5 Design and Manufacture, Level 5 Practical Woodwork and has already achieved National 4 English, National 4 Art, National 3 Geography and National 3 History.



**Kairo says:** *“The SCQF framework has allowed me to do things that are like what I want to do in the future. I really like practical woodwork. I just prefer working with wood rather than metal so Practical Woodwork allows me to do work with my hands which I enjoy. I don't like sitting in classes doing writing. I find it boring, and get easily distracted. I much prefer building something. Starting next week, on Wednesdays I will be doing the RUTS (Rural Urban Training Scheme) programme which is all about learning how a motorbike works, by stripping down the engine and fitting brakes. I'll even get to ride the bike off road at the end of the training. Doing RUTS will give me a Level 5 SCQF Motolearn Unit. In January I will do Bike Punks, which is another hands-on course so I get to do even more practical stuff. Next year I intend to go to Borders College to do a full time course in Carpentry and Joinery.”*



**Dean's learning experience** in S4 is a great example of how he is benefiting from a wide range of SCQF courses. Here is a brief outline of all the courses he is taking and his reasons for enjoying them.

#### **Youth Achievement Award (Silver- SCQF Level 5)**

*"This course is challenging and interesting; we have to complete 4 challenges which we choose ourselves and all have to agree. I like it best when we all work together as a team, we achieve great things like raising over £250 for charity. Some people have to learn basic things like listening and paying attention to others. I am getting more confident too."*

#### **English**

*"I'm doing Nat 4 English, I've already completed Nat 3, it's all about reading and writing and literature. I like it because we are allowed to work at our own pace and I don't feel too much pressure."*

#### **Social Subjects Learning Pathway**

*"I do lots of different things with different teachers: with Mr Clement we're learning all about animal cruelty and how animals are treated. This is set at just the right level for me, it's interesting to find out how animals are treated in other countries. With Mr Gruba we are doing Travel and Tourism (SCQF Level 5) learning about different countries, we've learned about Estonia, which I didn't really know much about and how to attract people to Dundee and other parts of Europe, it's interesting."*

#### **PC Passport**

*"This is all about computers, word processing, spreadsheets and excel: I'm getting better at using the computer. There are no exams, three assessments for Level 4 and two more for Level 5. There are no exams but I still get a qualification at SCQF Level 5 which is great. We've completed word processing and are working on adding and taking away in excel. I like this because I am learning new things and getting better at using Word."*

#### **Applications of Mathematics**

*"I have already achieved Nat 4 Applications of Mathematics and I'm working on Nat 5 Numeracy. We're learning about appreciation and depreciation now. It's all very interesting, new and useful in life."*

#### **Working with others**

*"I'm doing the John Muir Award with Louise (CLD worker). We go outside, into the woods, we're learning about safety and looking after the environment. It's good to get outside."*

#### **Borders College**

*"I go to Borders College one day a week, the course is called Skills for Learning and Work. It's a taster of different types of courses. it's good because we get to try out different things, including child care and cookery. I like all my courses at school and couldn't pick out a favourite, I do lots of different things."*