

Pearson response to the Department for Education Consultation National Curriculum April 2013

Introduction

In preparing our response, Pearson has consulted widely across its internal businesses, with the educational experts it works with to develop resources, qualifications and professional development courses, in the UK and internationally, and with the teachers and headteachers who use Pearson services. This response has been informed by their views.

Questions

1. Do you have any comments on the proposed aims for the National Curriculum as a whole as set out in the framework document?

We agree with the overall direction of the proposed aims. The government is right to emphasise rigour, standards and coherence. We agree that children should be taught the essential knowledge in the key disciplines, and applaud the desire to allow teachers greater freedom to use their professionalism and expertise. We also support the idea of teaching beyond and around the National Curriculum.

However, we would urge the government to recognise the importance of children also developing the cross-cutting skills and attitudes that higher education and employers tell us are essential for future success.¹ The importance of applied knowledge is also recognised in international studies such as PISA, which measures the capacity of students to extrapolate from what they have learned and to apply their knowledge in different settings.

Learning, therefore, should be as much about the application and manipulation of knowledge as the pure understanding of facts. Setting up knowledge and skills in opposition to each other is a false dichotomy – we need young people who can both ‘think’ and ‘do’. The skills that young people need for life and progression (thinking, communicating, making decisions, independence, collaborative learning, broader social skills) should be embedded throughout the curriculum. In order to benefit all learners, the National Curriculum should embody a commitment to building applied knowledge and skills.

The government needs to continue to emphasise that the new National Curriculum forms only part of a school’s own curriculum, and that there is scope for creativity

¹ See, for example, the Confederation of British Industry’s recent report, *Ambition for All in Schools*, November 2012

within and beyond it. Our research suggests that many schools are concerned that the new programmes of study are dry and restricting, and fear they will stifle creativity. The government needs to reassure schools that this will not be the case, and this message needs to be reinforced through the assessment and inspection regimes.

Finally, we would encourage the government to recognise the varying level of support that teachers will need to implement the new curriculum successfully, and to work collaboratively with other organisations to provide that support.

2. Do you agree that instead of detailed subject-level aims we should free teachers to shape their own curriculum aims based on the content in the programmes of study?

We support the suggestion that local curriculum development and implementation should be left to the professionalism of teachers, and that there should be flexibility for individual schools and departments to shape the curriculum to meet the needs of their particular pupils.

However, we would draw the Department's attention to three potential challenges to this approach:

- a) Our understanding of this aim is that the Programmes of Study should define the 'what', leaving teachers to determine the 'how'. However, there are several instances where the PoS veer into pedagogy, including defining particular methods of calculation in maths and of teaching reading in English, which risks undermining the government's key aim to empower teachers.
- b) In some subject areas (e.g. maths), more specificity around the content to be covered would help to provide all students with the same fundamentals. It would be helpful if the National Curriculum for KS3, in some subjects, included as much detail as the Primary Curriculum, so that there is consistency in the level of detail across KS2, 3 and 4 (through GCSE specifications).
- c) This aim can only be achieved if the teaching profession is adequately supported, through Continuous Professional Development and local networks to share best practice. This is especially true where the teaching community is not yet fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to help children achieve the aims of the National Curriculum, e.g. in computing.

3. Do you have any comments on the content set out in the draft programmes of study?

English

We feel the following elements represent a positive development for teachers and learners of English:

- **The emphasis on grammar and vocabulary.** The research of Debra Myhill and her team at the University of Exeter indicates the significant impact that the explicit teaching of grammar can have in improving writing across the ability spectrum. (We also note that high performing jurisdictions including Singapore and US states who have adopted the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts have focused on development of a level of assurance of grammar and vocabulary in primary and lower secondary education.) We welcome the emphasis on grammar for effect in the draft programme of study, and agree that an abstract understanding of grammatical terminology is not necessary in these early key stages.

In addition, recent research has indicated that vocabulary is one of the most significant barriers for low attainers, and this too is an issue of cultural capital – students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have had access to the broadest range of vocabulary.

- **The emphasis on reading for pleasure and independent reading**, and the absence of a prescribed list of authors (beyond Shakespeare). We are very pleased to see this paired with the freedom for schools and learners to choose their own texts, including contemporary texts.
- **The treatment of speaking and listening as process rather than product** (in comparison with the draft Programme of Study for KS4). Here, discussion, role-play and so on are used as part of the learning process in unlocking a text and talking about writing, which we feel is critical. Spoken English should not simply be reduced to the procedural skills required to present or debate. We recommend the skills focus and cross curricular aspect of leading Anglophone jurisdictions and standards including the US Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and the New South Wales curriculum.

We have concerns about the following elements:

- The definition of both 'text' and 'reading' feels very narrow. The programme of study presents a view of reading and writing that feels particularly literary, with very little detail on non-fiction texts, and non-fiction and functional writing forms. Looked at in conjunction with the draft KS4 programme of study (where there is a great deal of specificity around the literary authors, genres and periods to be studied), we are concerned that this could lead to the dilution of their importance in the English classroom. These are the texts that learners will encounter throughout their day-to-day lives and we have a

responsibility to equip them with the skills to understand and interpret them. We refer to examples such as that presented in the Common European Framework for Reference in Languages. A reduced selection of text situations and forms within the CEFR could be appropriate for KS3.

We also believe that there has to be some recognition of the role that digital and multimodal texts play in 21st century life. Reading and writing of digital and multimedia texts form a substantial part of leading Anglophone international standards.

- We are concerned about the absence of drama. The programme of study includes 'rehearsing and performing play scripts', but in order to facilitate a discussion of the language rather than to explore the play text dramatically. The evaluation of live performance, improvisation, devising and scripting elements included in the current curriculum have been omitted.

Mathematics

We broadly agree with the mathematics content outlined within the draft National Curriculum. We feel the following elements represent a positive development for teachers and learners of mathematics:

- Setting higher expectations for all students.
- The greater focus on calculation.
- The greater emphasis on multiplicative reasoning, ratio and proportion. Students often struggle with these topics, but they can be used to solve a range of real life problems.
- The new emphasis on financial mathematics.
- Greater emphasis on mastery of Number concepts being covered earlier providing a good building block for progression in mathematics.
- Greater emphasis on mathematics in a STEM context.

We have concerns about the following elements:

KS2

- The introduction of concepts at KS2 which are known to be found difficult (such as the adding and subtracting of fractions with different denominators and mixed numbers, and long division) may cause anxiety and a lack of confidence in mathematics. We would particularly question the inclusion of one place decimals in Year 3, two place decimals in Year 4, column subtraction in Year 3, and long division and multiplication in Years 5 and 6. We would urge the government to consult with experts in child psychology, as well as experts in early maths acquisition, to ensure that concepts are introduced at a stage at which children are conceptually ready for them. The

risk otherwise is that a substantial group of children will be unnecessarily switched off maths.

- The inclusion of Roman numerals will take up curriculum time that would be better spent on more relevant maths, such as numbers in other bases like binary and hexadecimal (relating to computing).

KS3

- We agree with the importance of using 'every relevant subject' to develop pupils' mathematical fluency and confidence in numeracy. However, this follows through only to the science and computing curricula (where there is specific mention of mathematics). There is no mention, for example, in the geography, design and technology or music curricula, all of which also naturally require some mathematical/numerical understanding.
- We welcome setting higher expectation for all students, but feel that knowing, applying and understanding (as set out in the Attainment targets) some of the harder maths skills by the end of KS3 does not take into consideration that students learn at different paces. Internationally, students of different abilities approach topics at different times, with different focuses, in their secondary education² and are sometimes tiered, for example in Singapore students are split into Ordinary, Normal Academic and Normal Technical.
- Our international benchmarking research shows that a lot of the topics below are assessed at 16 in the high performing jurisdictions and highly regarded international qualifications informing that these skills are often taught later in Secondary education at a higher ability.
- We would welcome seeing different routes through the content below and different approaches for different ability groups:
 - Interpreting and comparing numbers in standard $A \times 10^n$ where n is positive or negative
 - Expanding double brackets was previously Yr 10
 - Sketching and interpreting quadratic graphs
 - Quadratic graphs
 - Simultaneous equations

² For example, In Singapore, at Secondary 2 (age 13 – 14):

i. O level students learn: simultaneous equations, quadratic equations and set language and notation
ii. N(A) level students go on to learn much of the functions and graphs and equations and inequalities learnt by O level students in Secondary 1 (though with a few exceptions, for example, 'formulating a linear equation in one unknown to solve problems). They also learn simultaneous equations along with O level students, but not quadratics or set language and notation.
iii. N (T) level students go on to learn functions and graphs and only solutions to equations (no inequalities).

- Interpreting graphs of linear, quadratic, cubic and reciprocal functions and graphs that model real situations
 - Calculate an original amount when given the transformed amount after a percentage change
 - Calculate the results of any proportional change using multiplicative methods
 - Speed, density, pressure, problems involving constant or average rates of change
 - Pythagoras Theorem
- There are some important topics/concepts which would merit inclusion in the KS3 list:
 - Loci - this is an important topic/concept that relates to both geometry and algebra
 - Bearings
 - Constructions of shapes other than triangles and polygons
 - Rotation
 - Translation and reflection is mentioned at KS2 and enlargement/similarity mentioned at KS3
 - Rotation is included in new KS4 programme of study
 - There is nothing explicit about using calculators or ICT, except:
 - In Number 'Use a calculator and other technologies to calculate results accurately and then interpret them appropriately'
 - In Geometry and Measures 'Use concrete and digital instruments to measure line segments and angles in geometric figures, including interpreting scale drawings'
- Rich historical and cultural roots of mathematics not mentioned
- There are a few topics where progression between KS3 and new KS4 programme of study could be made clearer and more consistent.
 - The Number Theory strand is not consistent – at KS3 it includes powers, roots, surds, HCF, but at KS4 it becomes far less specific.
 - Rotation is not included in KS3 and is the only transformation missing, however it is included in KS4

- In new KS4 Statistics only mentioned for grouped, continuous data.
- The current statements emphasise flexibility and creativity in the delivery which we welcome. However more teacher support on the following areas would be useful, especially for non-specialist teachers:
 - Guidance on how ICT should be used in KS3 Maths. Should teachers be using it as a tool or should students be using ICT for graphing etc.
 - Financial mathematics is specified as an aim, but not specifically mentioned within the content
 - The statements vary in scope and specificity; some statements are very specific, whilst others are of a higher level of conceptual understanding.
 - It would be useful to have more specific definitions for certain terms for consistency and to avoid repetition:
 - The use of 'within and outside mathematics' to be defined within the aims
 - A clearer definition of fluency, problem solving and reasoning is needed.
 - Standard form needs to be further defined with A between 0 and 1, some of the wording needs to be clarified
 - The use of modelling, context, etc to prevent repetition

Science

Given the importance of climate change and environmental issues in society it would make sense to introduce the basics of global warming and climate change, as well as environmental degradation/resource depletion affecting habitats at the upper end of KS2. Alternatively global warming/climate change could be covered in KS2 Geography and environmental issues affecting habitats could be brought into KS2 Science. Many schools across the UK already run environmental clubs and are part of the green initiatives such as Eco-Schools. Such wider primary school initiatives should be tied up with explicit objectives in the science (and geography) programmes of study in primary schools. We know that in the US at elementary school level, environmental education can take the form of science enrichment curriculum, natural history field trips, community service projects, and participation in outdoor science schools.

There appears to be too heavy a weighting on biology at KS1 meaning there is less chemistry and physics at this level. We would like to question the reasoning behind this as we know from international curricula such as the Cambridge International Primary Curriculum that there is a better balance of all three sciences at Grade 1

and 2 (KS1 equivalent). It is important that all three sciences get an equal balance throughout the primary age range.

Working Scientifically needs to be made more explicit. Educational theory over the last 40 years has universally emphasised the importance of hands on investigations with children. Whilst we applaud the working scientifically strand in the proposed programme of study we believe there should be more specific opportunities for children to develop their scientific enquiry skills through hands on learning and investigations. We know this is the case in primary/elementary science in North America, Australia and Europe and indeed in the UK it was part of the recommendations in Ofsted's 2011 report Successful Science.

Languages

We welcome the decision to make Languages compulsory at KS2. We are also pleased to see all four skills represented across both key stages, and we welcome the notion that students of all abilities will be encouraged to go beyond understanding the written word so that they appreciate what they read. However, we would also like to have seen references to cultural awareness and understanding.

Whilst no languages are excluded from study, having a list of languages runs the risk of creating a situation where some languages are seen as second best. We would prefer schools to be able to choose their own language depending on their expertise and the experiences of their students.

At KS3, we support the content of the proposed programme of study, but have the following concerns:

- Voices and moods - the specific reference to voices and moods could lead to confusion as the terms are not defined. We have assumed that these terms refer to the subjunctive (mood) and the passive (voice), because the indicative and imperative moods and the active voice are the “default” moods and voice in languages and the starting point for learning. We believe it is appropriate to introduce voices and moods as lexical items which learners can recognise and use but that it is too demanding to expect children to learn these as grammatical concepts. We note that in other high performing jurisdictions, such as New South Wales, Finland, New Zealand, and Alberta, the subjunctive (mood) and the passive (voice) are not included in the equivalent of the Key Stage 4 curriculum.
- Translation - translation is a useful activity which helps learners to engage with the meaning and the grammatical structure of the language. For translation into the target language we feel that translation of sentences is appropriate but that translating a short text is too demanding. Translation into English is also valid but it is just one of a number of ways of demonstrating comprehension so should not be given undue emphasis.

- Literary texts - it would be useful if clarification were provided about what is meant by literary texts. Perhaps some examples of texts could be given for the different languages.
- 'Read and show comprehension of original and adapted materials' - It would be useful to have examples to illustrate what is meant by 'original' materials.

Geography

While we welcome the focus on basic principles and on establishing a sound understanding of the characteristics and features of physical and human geography, we would like the geography curriculum to also develop students' awareness of issues that impact people, places and environments and of the contested nature of human interaction with the physical environment (e.g. sustainable development).

Geography is a subject that can contribute to the development of responsible global citizens and an understanding of differing values and attitudes towards people, place and environments and to not include specific reference to this seems to be a missed opportunity.

We would also have expected to have seen some coverage of climate change in the programme of study.

History

The content of the detailed subject-level aims themselves are welcome. We are particularly pleased to see the inclusion of what are widely agreed within the history community to be important historical concepts, a focus on evidence and substantive knowledge.

We agree that it is important for young people to develop a sense of chronology: pupils should be given a chronological framework of the past in order to place events in a broader historical context.

There is a risk that the first bullet point could lead to a very British-centric approach and should perhaps be reworded to include 'know and understand the story of these islands: how the British people shaped this nation and how Britain influenced the world, and how the world influenced Britain' (words in italics represent our addition). A focus on British history is acceptable, but this needs to be broadened out more. For example, how can we consider the Crusades without considering Islam? We also are concerned that too narrow a focus on British history will not reflect the history of the diverse society of modern Britain and thus may serve to exclude some students based on ethnicity, religion and belief. The history included is also highly political with very little focus on social and cultural history.

We welcome the instruction that 'The teaching of the content should be approached as a combination of overview and in-depth studies' because there is much good practice of this method currently at KS3. However, we are concerned about how much depth is required as this is not clear within the content descriptions. With a

lack of time within the curriculum, it might be wise to provide some guidance on the expectation of depth.

At KS1, we would be keen to understand why certain people have been included within the programme of study, such as Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Fry.? We are also concerned that many of the examples chosen are important in ways that are difficult for children of this age to understand fully.

At KS2 there is a lack of guidance relating to the depth of knowledge required, particularly relating to inclusions such as 'Pupils should be taught about the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome'.

At KS3 there is reference to the building on the historical concepts taught in KS2, but these are not explicitly mentioned within the KS2 content and so could be missed out at Primary level. Similarly, there is only reference to 'the use of historical sources', which should also include 'and interpretations'.

Computing

We welcome the shift in focus away from ICT and towards computing. It would be helpful if the content was grouped according to the subject aims or other themes. Generally there seems to be an imbalance, with much greater emphasis on Computer Science in comparison to the other strands identified in the Royal Society report.

We would like to see the following points included in the programme of study:

KS1

- Using technology and creating digital content, with examples.

KS2

- Working collaboratively, using technology and creating digital content.
- e-safety, responsible use, social, ethical and environmental responsibilities.

KS3

- The inclusion of examples for those without a background in Computer Science.
- e-safety, responsible use, social, ethical and environmental responsibilities.

KS4

- The content for this key stage is too brief and needs exemplification. In its current form, non-specialist teachers will struggle to help children apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired at lower key stages in ways that are appropriate and challenging.

- e-safety, responsible use, social, ethical and environmental responsibilities.

Citizenship

There are some aspects we believe to be lacking in the subject level aims including:

- **Concepts** The lack of political philosophy, including an understanding of concepts of justice, fairness and morality.
- **Global development** The lack of content concerning globalisation including development of global economics, challenges in inequalities between rich and poor countries, sustainable development, climate change, economic crises, conflict and disaster relief. We refer to the DFID sponsored Global Schools Partnership 2010 which reported the positive impact on student awareness, attitude and response of learning about global issues.
- **Economy** The lack of content on local and national government spending ensuring pupils understand that resources are limited. The role of the individual and communities in contributing and profiting from the economy.
- **Democracy** Pupils in KS3 are required to learn about the development of the UK democracy but do not need to have a basis of comparison or an understanding of democracy as a concept. At KS4 the differentiation is in terms of amount of detail rather than level of critique. Pupils at KS4 should be considering the effectiveness or otherwise of institutions and considering the extent to which institutions in the UK and internationally are democratic.
- **Diversity** The learning outcome at KS4 needs to be reflected at KS3. Students should develop understanding of diversity in the UK at the earliest opportunity.
- **Citizenship skills** This aspect of citizenship seems to have been lost and exists in the GCSE. We consider it important that pupils be encouraged to engage with the content, question it and start to form their own opinions based on valid evidence and logic. Similarly, they need to be encouraged to respect the opinions of others and understand where opinions arise from. Finally, pupils should be encouraged to form skills of negotiation, to enable them to discuss viewpoints with others.

PE/Sport

We welcome the return of competitive sport to the curriculum (although would like to ensure that students are required to develop their techniques in non-competitive sport as well).

While we support the aims generally (e.g. the inclusion of safe self rescue in different water-based situations), we are worried that some of them might be impractical (different water-based situations) or difficult for schools to monitor or measure (e.g. take part in further outdoor and adventurous activities in a range of

environments, continue to take part in competitive sports and activities outside school through community links or sports clubs).

We would like to see further clarification of some of the aims, specifically:

1. What is the definition of sustained period of time?
2. There is a stated aim that children should 'lead healthy, active lives'. However, this is not specifically mentioned in any of the key stages.

Design and Technology

We are concerned that the Programme of Study focuses too much on practical skills, mending and repairing things, rather than on creativity and problem solving and responding to a brief. We are worried that this represents a lowering of standards. As well as this more general concern, we would like consideration of the following:

- The PoS refers to 'decorative objects' - this is not appropriate for a subject that designs to meet clients' needs.
- The inclusion of new materials and the most up to date technology and techniques, including CAD and CAM.
- The appropriateness of electronics at KS1.

There are some additions to the content that we would not consider part of design and technology, namely horticulture, construction and mechanics.

Music

The programme of study seems to be predominantly about music rather than about doing/participating in music. There is a need to ensure that creativity and experience retain their importance.

Some specific areas which could address this are:

- the inclusion of composition
- more detail about the music historical periods or 'great' musicians
- the inclusion of music technology
- the development of the history of music beyond KS2

4. Does the content set out in the draft programmes of study represent a sufficiently ambitious level of challenge for pupils at each key stage?

On the whole, we believe the content in the draft programmes of study does represent a sufficiently ambitious level of challenge for pupils at each key stage.

There are some areas, however, where we believe there is insufficient information to feel confident about the level of challenge. For example, the content of the English KS3 programme of study presents an ambitious level of challenge in terms of a literary perspective and in terms of explicit inclusion of technical aspects, but without more specificity, it is difficult to make a judgement on the other elements of reading and writing in the programme of study.

Similarly, in geography, there is a risk that the lack of precision in the programme of study could lead to considerable variation in the depth that matters, processes and skills will be taught.

As mentioned previously, in maths, particularly in the Primary years, we are concerned that the level of challenge may be too high. Our concern is that students will simply master the process, rather than gain conceptual understanding of what they are doing. Over-ambitious targets at this age may lead to children being switched off maths, rather than enthused and excited by it.

It is critical that, for teachers to be able to teach this ambitious new content, especially non-specialist teachers needing to teach new content at a higher level of demand, there will need to be accompanying teacher training so they fully understand the content themselves and how best to teach it.

5. Do you have any comments on the proposed wording of the attainment targets?

We think that the attainment targets across the subjects need expansion and we recommend that there is a focus on the nature and quality of evidence that learners will be required to produce to demonstrate achievement in each key stage.

In some instances (e.g. maths), the use of technical language (such as 'expanding products of binomials' and 'intersection and union of the prime factors') make them difficult for non-specialist teachers to understand and will need explanation and guidance.

In PE, the use of the word 'competitive' could risk the exclusion of other non competitive sports.

6. Do you agree that the draft programmes of study provide for effective progression between the key stages?

The draft programmes of study in their current form may not always enable effective progression between key stages. The absence of an assessment framework is likely to be a barrier to a consistent understanding and measurement of progression. The significant difference in the level of detail in the KS1-2 programmes (English and maths) and that of KS3 will also make planning for transition challenging.

For example, there is a lack of guidance over what attainment at KS3 should look like and this creates a problem in terms of understanding progression in some subjects. In the English programme of study, students are expected to 'extend' their grammatical knowledge from KS2 and 'analyse more challenging texts'. It would be useful to exemplify what this scope of extension and extra challenge is expected to look like. Similarly, examples of texts that are appropriate for study at KS2 and KS3 would help with transition planning (so long as these are clearly positioned as exemplars rather than 'set' texts).

Other subjects where more detail would be helpful to aid progression included music (history of music, access to live music) and D&T (research, creativity and innovation).

7. Do you agree that we should change the subject information and communication technology to computing, to reflect the content of the new programmes of study for this subject?

We support a change of name, provided the content reflects a balance of all three of the strands identified in the Royal Society report, as suggested above.

8. Does the new National Curriculum embody an expectation of higher standards for all children?

The new National Curriculum does embody an expectation of higher standards in terms of content coverage. However, a clearer assessment framework and examples of the evidence learners are expected to produce would enable greater certainty that this goal will be achieved.

It is important to be aware that standards cannot be raised simply by increasing the level of demands of the content. There also needs to be a parallel focus on supporting and training teachers. Pearson are keen to engage with schools and the DfE on what is needed to achieve this.

More detail on both these areas is given in question 11.

9. What impact - either positive or negative - will our proposals have on the 'protected characteristic' groups?

The learning outcome in the Citizenship curriculum on diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities appears in KS4 but not in KS3. This outcome should include content on disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, gender identity, religion and belief. The content should appear in both key stages, with suitable differentiation in KS4. There is a risk of a negative impact if students at KS3 do not learn about diversity.

10. To what extent will the new National Curriculum make clear to parents what their children should be learning at each stage of their education?

On the whole, the new National Curriculum makes it clear to parents what their children should be learning at each key stage. However, without a framework that describes expectations of what they should be producing, it is arguably now less clear: there is no sense of what attainment might look like at different abilities or a year-by-year breakdown of learning as with the Framework, which is a useful aspect of the US Common Core and the Singapore curriculum. The slimmer approach is probably more digestible for parents, but often the statements are hard to understand, and they do not allow a parent to locate their child in terms of what they should be studying and how they should be performing.

11. What key factors will affect schools' ability to implement the new National Curriculum successfully from September 2014?

High quality training and professional development will be essential to equip teachers to implement the new National Curriculum effectively. In many instances the new content (explicit grammar teaching in English, harder concepts in mathematics, new concepts in geography, etc.) will be extremely challenging for some teachers without support and professional development.

Similarly, the lack of examples in the curriculum (e.g. KS3 English), or the density of the language in the subject aims (e.g. maths), will challenge teachers who need to interpret the proposed learning outcomes in context.

If the government is to achieve its aim of encouraging teachers to use their own professional expertise to design school curricula that include but go beyond the National Curriculum, thought also needs to be given to building these curriculum development skills across the teaching profession.

As well as the right level of training, teachers will need new teaching and learning resources, matched to the new curriculum. Publishers and other educational resource suppliers will need sight as early as possible of the final programmes of study in order to develop these supporting materials in good time.

12. Who is best placed to support schools and/or develop resources that schools will need to teach the new National Curriculum?

Where the content and skills represent a significant move in a new direction, such as the explicit inclusion of grammar in English, professionals, subject associations, and of course publishers and other educational service providers have a critical role to play in providing training and high-quality resources to engage and educate schools and teachers on the demands of the new curriculum. This will in turn enable teachers to design their own school curriculum and create tailored resources and materials which suit their particular learners. Lateral networks between schools can also be very powerful.

In our research with school leaders, when asked what support they will need to implement the new National Curriculum effectively, 84% of primary senior leaders, and 65% of secondary senior leaders, cited the need for training and CPD, and 95% of primary and 70% of secondary leaders cited the need for new resources. It is therefore imperative that this is available at the time of planning and curriculum development in schools.

Publishers and other educational service providers will be keen to work with the Department in this process. Early involvement in the development of the new curriculum will enable time to develop high-quality and robust resources and training to support its implementation.

13. Do you agree that we should amend the legislation to disapply the National Curriculum programmes of study, attainment targets and statutory assessment arrangements, as set out in section 12 of the consultation document?

Yes. Our recent research with senior leaders of schools indicates that a significant proportion of schools would welcome the opportunity to make changes to their curriculum in advance of 2014, in order to start preparing children who will need to move to this new curriculum in due course.

Of 43 primary school senior leaders, two thirds intended to roll out the new National Curriculum between this year and next. And of 67 secondary senior leaders, 52% were planning to roll out the new National Curriculum with year 7 students in 2013, 50% with year 8 students in 2013, and 29% with Year 9 students in 2013.

There is, however, patchy knowledge and understanding of which subjects and year groups can be disapplied, and which cannot, so efforts will need to be made to communicate clearly any change in this area.