



National curriculum and assessment from September 2014: information for schools

Curriculum

Following public consultations in February and July, the government has published the final statutory version of the new [national curriculum](#). In line with our 'digital only' policy, the new curriculum will be available only in PDF and in HTML format. It covers all subjects and key stages, except for key stage 4 English, mathematics and science. They will be subject to a full public consultation before being finalised to align with new GCSEs in these subjects.

In reviewing the national curriculum the government has sought to give all children, regardless of their background, access to a high-quality curriculum, benchmarked against the best-performing nations in the world.

This is the new curriculum that will be taught in all maintained primary and secondary schools from September 2014. It provides a standard against which academies and free schools can benchmark their curricula, where they choose to develop their own.

All maintained primary and secondary schools must teach this national curriculum to all year groups from September 2014. The exceptions to this are:

- Pupils in year 2 and year 6 in 2014/15, who will be taught this national curriculum in all subjects except English, mathematics and science, where they will follow the current national curriculum. This is because these pupils will be the last cohort to sit the current key stage 1 assessment and key stage 2 tests. These pupils will also have followed the current national curriculum in 2013/14 (as years 1 and 5) for English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils in years 10 and 11 in 2014/15, who will be taught the new national curriculum in all subjects except English, mathematics and science programmes of study, where they will study the current key stage 4 programmes of study. The new national curriculum in English, mathematics and science will be introduced from 2015, alongside reformed GCSEs in these subjects. Pupils will sit the first exams for new GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics in summer 2017, and in other subjects to follow.

Disapplication

In order to help the transition to the new curriculum, and to give schools more flexibility over how they prepare for it, we have 'disapplied' the majority of the current national curriculum for this academic year, 2013/14. Disapplication means that schools still have to teach the subjects of the national curriculum, but they do not have to follow the programmes of study or attainment targets. For key stage 3, assessment arrangements have also been disapplied.

All subjects have been disapplied at all key stages, except for English, mathematics and science for pupils in years 1, 2, 5 and 6. This is because the year 2 and 6 pupils will still need to take the key stage 1 and 2 tests in these subjects in the summer of 2014, and the year 1 and 5 pupils will sit them in the summer of 2015 when they become the new years 2 and 6.

Assessment

We accepted the Expert Panel's recommendation to remove level descriptors from the national curriculum and not replace them. This is because we agreed that levels have become too abstract, do not give parents meaningful information about how their child is performing, nor give pupils information about how to improve. Levels have detracted from real feedback and schools have found it difficult to apply them consistently – the criteria are ambiguous and require teachers to decide how to weight a huge array of factors. Beyond the tests at key stage 2 and GCSEs at key stage 4, it will be for schools to decide how they assess pupils' progress.

The first new key stage 2 tests in English, mathematics and science, based on the new national curriculum, will be sat by pupils for the first time in the summer of 2016. Sample questions will be available from summer 2014, and sample full tests will be available from the summer of 2015. Primary academies and free schools will also take the new key stage 2 tests.

We consulted in 2013 on a new framework for primary assessment and accountability, and will publish the findings of the consultation shortly.

Assessment Innovation Award

Many schools and teaching schools are already developing and sharing new curriculum and assessment systems in advance of these changes.

We have set up a small innovation fund to enable schools to share these systems and processes on a much wider basis. We want to encourage schools to develop packages that clearly explain their approach to assessment for others to access and use if they wish.

For more information about the assessment innovation award and how to apply please click [here](#).

Model assessment systems, case studies, and examples of 'what good looks like' in relation to the new programmes of study, will be made available throughout the year.

Publishers and other providers are already bringing new materials to support teaching of the new national curriculum, and its assessment, to the market, and this choice will increase during this academic year. A number of these providers are also organising events around the country for teachers to hear from other teachers, subject associations and others how they might go about redesigning their curricula and the support that is on offer. We advise checking their websites for the latest information.

Set out below are some of the materials available free to teachers that have been funded, at least in part, by the DfE. We will keep this list updated as the year progresses.

What support is available to schools?

The government believes that headteachers and their staff are best-placed to decide what training and resources are needed to support excellent teaching of the new curriculum in their schools. As a result, there will be no central, national roll-out of identical training packages. We expect schools to prioritise the use of their existing INSET days to help staff to prepare to teach the new national curriculum.

We are helping the system to lead change, by providing additional funding to teaching schools so that they can help schools in their alliances to prepare for the new national curriculum. If you are not already in a teaching school alliance, you can still contact your local teaching school, who may be able to provide some support as you plan the changes to the curriculum.

Curriculum design

The National College for Teaching and Leadership has worked with a number of headteachers to produce an [online tool](#) to help schools to prepare for curriculum change. This includes sections on assessing your own curriculum and sharing views on what makes a great curriculum.

The government funds a number of programmes which provide subject-specific support to teachers.

Mathematics

The National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics (NCETM) has a range of [support](#) available for schools to prepare for the mathematics programmes of study. Registration is free.

Science

The National STEM Centre has developed [new materials](#) for teaching the primary science programmes of study. The National Science Learning Centre has a wide range of [resources](#) available and more materials to support teaching of the new science curriculum will be available soon. Again, registration is free. In addition, there are resources available from science institutions such as the [Royal Society of Chemistry](#) and the [Institute of Physics](#).

Computing

The government is providing an additional £2 million funding for the creation of new master computer teachers and this [network](#) is currently being developed across the country.

In addition, we have facilitated a series of 'expert subject groups' made up of members of teaching schools, subject associations and Higher Education Institutions. They have been looking at the challenges posed by the new curriculum, the materials currently out there to support teachers, and the key gaps in materials. These groups have started to produce their own guidance for schools as they prepare to deliver the new curriculum. The [computing](#) and [geography](#) expert groups have already published their work. The other groups will be publishing their work in due course and links will be placed in updated versions of this sheet.

There are also a range of subject associations and other membership organisations, such as [The Princes' Teaching Institute](#), and many are developing new materials to support the teaching of the new programmes of study in their subject.

What will happen when?

The key dates for curriculum and qualifications reform are on our [need to know timeline](#).

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