

## Primary National Curriculum Programmes

The draft Primary National Curriculum Programmes of Study for English, maths and science were published on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June and will be subject to an informal consultation so they can be widely discussed. The key aims of this new Primary Curriculum are to restore rigour in the key primary subjects; to be more demanding than the existing National Curriculum and to align England with those countries that have the highest-performing school systems. Additionally, there will be a consultation later this summer on a plan to introduce foreign languages from age seven at the start of Key Stage 2. There will be no other changes to the structure of the Primary Curriculum. The Government will maintain the requirement for the teaching of art and design, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, and physical education across all the primary years. The DfE believe by raising standards in basics such as reading, grammar, fractions and basic scientific concepts, children will be equipped to do more advanced work once they start secondary school. It will consider the public debate and re-draft the programmes before re-publishing them later in the year for formal consultation. The final programmes will be introduced in primary schools from September 2014.

The programmes of study read very much like the previous Primary Strategy documents which listed the core objectives by year group, although there are some significant differences, additions and deletions – but overall it tends to be more formal. In mathematics, for example there is more emphasis on learning formal methods and remembering number facts from the start rather than building understanding in calculation through informal written methods. In English, Speaking and Listening is removed as an Attainment Target, although some elements are integrated into Reading and Writing. There is additional prescription of what should be taught in phonics (very similar to the National Strategies Letters and Sounds) and far more requirements for technical understanding of grammar (again, much of this was in the previous National Strategies). Apart from some additional content, science appears to have changed the least.

There are no levels attributed to Attainment targets these are replaced “by the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to have the knowledge, skills and understanding of the matters taught in the relevant Programme of Study.” Therefore assessment is against the objectives, rather than having a separate “best fit” level description. It is likely that tests will be created to assess against these objectives. Michael Gove’s letter to Tim Oates states “We will work closely with the teaching profession over the coming months to determine exactly how the new National Curriculum will be enhanced and assessed.” What is for certain is there will be no comparability between the assessments made using National Curriculum levels and the new NC tests / assessments. We can assume that age specific tests will be produced, and pupils will simply pass or fail – like the Y1 phonics test. However, when matching the age related to the level, some of the new content is significantly higher in its expectations which reflects the DfE requirement of higher standards of achievement in English, mathematics and science.

The publication of the draft Programmes of Study for English, maths and science follow a report by an Expert Panel, chaired by Tim Oates, which made recommendations on the framework for a new National Curriculum, and a parallel report by the Department for Education which identified the key features of curricula for maths, science and English in high-performing jurisdictions.

Education Secretary Michael Gove’s letter to the Expert Panel can be found [here](#).

The draft Programmes of Study for English, maths and science can be found [here](#). These apply to England only.

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