



Department
for Education

Consultation Response Form

Consultation closing date: 16 April 2013
Your comments must reach us by that date.

Reform of the National Curriculum in England

Consultation Response Form

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website (<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>).

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name Wendy Scott, President, TACTYC

Organisation (if applicable) TACTYC, the association for the professional development of early years educators

Address: Peter House, Braithwaite, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 5SY

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Public Communications Unit by e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's '[Contact Us](#)' page.

Please tick one category that best describes you as a respondent

Primary School

Secondary School

Special School

<input type="checkbox"/> Organisation representing school teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Subject Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Further Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Academy	<input type="checkbox"/> Employer/Business Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please Specify:

TACTYC, the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators, is a membership based organisation with over 500 members. Our activities include:

- **'advocacy and lobbying'** - providing a voice for all those engaged with the professional development of practitioners through responding to early years policy initiatives and contributing to the debate on the education and training of the UK early years workforce;
- **'informing'** – developing the knowledge-base of all those concerned with early years education and care by disseminating research findings through, for example, our international [Early Years Journal](#), annual conference, website and occasional publications;
- **'supporting'** – encouraging informed and constructive discussion and debate and supporting practitioner reflection, the use of evidence-based practice and practitioner-research through, for example, our [newsletter](#) and website (www.tactyc.org.uk).

Are you answering this consultation in response to particular subjects? Please tick all those that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> art & design	<input type="checkbox"/> citizenship	<input type="checkbox"/> computing
<input type="checkbox"/> design & technology	<input type="checkbox"/> geography	<input type="checkbox"/> history
<input type="checkbox"/> languages	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> physical education
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable		

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

Comments:

Broader, principled and more inclusive aims that can guide planning are needed rather than the content-related aspirations expressed in this document.

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?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Surely curriculum content should be defined by the aims rather than the other way around. This comment applies most particularly to the proposals for English, maths and science which are so detailed and time consuming that they leave little scope for teachers to shape anything. As the government has asserted, teachers should have the freedom to exercise their professional judgement as to how they can best offer the curriculum to the pupils in their classes.

We agree with the first part of the statement, ie: 'Instead of detailed subject-level aims we should free teachers to shape their own curriculum aims'.

We do not agree with the phrase: 'based on the content in the programmes of study', as these contents are too detailed, not always relevant to young children, and not focused on the way that young children learn. Teachers this have little freedom to shape their own curriculum aims.

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

Comments:

The proposed National Curriculum framework for Key Stage 1 places unrealistic and inappropriate expectations on pupils at too early an age. It will inhibit progress for large numbers of children, turning many away from learning in school, and label others unjustifiably as failures.

The impact of a lack of continuity from the EYFS in the prime areas of learning and development, particularly the absence of PSED, is a difficulty as this implies that all children will have achieved the broad foundations in these subjects that are needed for progression in academic subjects. Communication skills draw on a multiplicity of modes of expression which should be recognised and supported and children need to develop an awareness of the variety of different ways that ideas can be expressed and represented.

Although there is a welcome emphasis on reading for pleasure, reading aloud, and giving children opportunities for discussion about texts, there is not enough recognition of the importance of spoken language, particularly in the early years.

As the results from the phonics check in Y1 have revealed, the over-formalised view of literacy teaching is not effective in Year 1, especially for more able readers, many summer born children, and boys, who develop more slowly than girls at this age. There are indications that it is having a negative effect on spelling.

The PoS in writing for younger children is overly controlled, as transcription skills are emphasised at the expense of composition. Teacher demonstration and rigid sentence construction is no substitute for children's own emergent writing skills, building on their earlier understandings at home and in the early years. Teacher modelling in authentic contexts is also often more effective than demonstrations. This imbalance is unlikely to narrow the gap between standards of reading and writing and will deter rather than motivate children who want to write.

The aim of raising of achievement in mathematics and science will not be met through the transposition of some content from later to earlier years, and indeed this is likely to prove problematic. It is vital that the 'aims' of mathematics also acknowledge and emphasise the significance of building on children's existing mathematical symbols and representations. Rather than an undue emphasis only on skills and facts, these subjects, and indeed all others, like language, are most effectively learned in a meaningful context; young children's conceptual development crucially depends on direct experience. Logical reasoning and problem solving cannot be mastered at a theoretical level without first hand experimentation in a range of practical contexts, so the loss of using and applying mathematical skills is highly counter-

productive. Children are active agents in their learning; their experiences and cultural knowledge from home and the community should be valued and built on, not ignored. Their experiences own ideas reveal the level of their understanding, and motivate them to add and improve on that with the help of responsive teaching. Mathematics needs to acknowledge the importance of children's early mathematical representations (graphicacy) including calculations, allowing children to gradually integrate their new 'school' knowledge with their own understandings. The value of children's learning through play, acknowledged in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains relevant at least up to age six or seven, and this, together with the underpinning principles of the EYFS, should be a recognised part of the transition into Year 1 and Key Stage 1. It would be helpful if the importance of using and applying mathematics could be coherently threaded through the PoS.

In view of the importance of experience out of doors for all young children, especially those living in urban areas, and in the interests of future generations, we ask for the reinstatement of the existing requirement that Year 1 and 2 pupils should be taught to care for the environment and to have opportunities to explore natural outdoor environments. This also includes understanding the factors involved in climate change, which should also be explored either as a curriculum area in its own right, or within geography.

There are particular concerns about the prescribed content of the history curriculum at Key Stage 1, which risks undermining children's understanding and motivation to learn because it is beyond their comprehension. For six and seven year olds, the understanding of the passage of time and the wish to learn more is best fostered through their personal experience within the family and community, and that triggered by their particular interests.

The specification of year-by-year content will create an inflexible approach to planning, teaching, and learning which will be particularly problematic in small schools with mixed age classes. The allowance of time for the school curriculum will not compensate for the demands of such a content-heavy curriculum where teachers are trying to cover an impossible range of work.

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?

<input type="checkbox"/> Sufficiently ambitious	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sufficiently ambitious	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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Comments:

Transition from Reception to Year 1 has long been known to be a challenge. There are already concerns at the downward pressure exerted on to children in the reception year caused by recent counter-productive demands in relation to phonics. The proposed changes in the curriculum do not build on the prime and specific areas of learning and development within the EYFS. This is particularly likely to affect groups of children who are vulnerable to slower progress or lower starting points e.g. those with SEN, who speak EAL etc.

Continuity and progression across the primary curriculum has not been thought through. In particular, the links between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are not coherent. Expectations in the content of English and maths are too ambitious for many children in Year 1: expected standards when they are seen as the norm are demotivating for many, particularly the youngest children, who may be labelled as less able, when they are simply younger. A year makes a very big difference developmentally for six and seven year olds.

In contrast, proposals for the foundation subjects and for important skills for learning and understanding, including evaluation, are not particularly ambitious, and do not explore the potential rigour within the arts, physical education and the humanities.

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

Comments:

Level descriptions have the potential to improve and deepen children's learning as against attainment targets which tend to lead to an emphasis on superficial rote learning within a narrow prescribed range of content.

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

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Until proposals for the assessment of attainment and progress are published, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the proposed programmes of study in terms of progression.

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?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

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

Yes

No

x Not sure

Comments:

Although the aspiration to achieve higher standards is evident, the expectation is not likely to be reached. Overall, Inclusion issues are ignored. There is no acknowledgement of what the child already knows, and where their interests lie, which are the most effective starting points for engaging pupils in new learning. Some of the programmes of study will result in failure for many pupils. It is a grave misunderstanding to think that increased content, unrelated to children's existing levels of knowledge and understanding, means a higher standard of learning.

There is no recognition of the importance of pedagogy determined by teachers who know their pupils individually and understand child development and learning as well as subject content and disciplines. The changing priorities for teaching over the primary years, with young children needing experience of active learning through play rather than direct instruction, and time to recapitulate and reinforce conceptual development in varied contexts is not mentioned. Systematic feedback is not emphasised, and coherence across the curriculum is not considered. There is no sense of the kind of cross-curricular working that makes learning meaningful and memorable to children.

We do not yet know what is proposed for assessment, which drives the curriculum. There is a danger of widespread artificial failure due to unrealistic targets and inappropriate pedagogy. Summer born children are particularly at risk, with the Foundation Stage Profile promoting expected levels of achievement which are beyond their capability due to their relative immaturity and lack of experience. The literacy and maths learning goals are not realistic and will lead to a counter-productive distortion of children's experience if they are pursued at the expense of other more formative and valuable learning. The Year 1 phonics check and associated restricted work on a single approach to reading is leading to an over-emphasis on a limited strategy which will be compounded by the grammar, punctuation and spelling test which is to be introduced in Key Stage 2.

TACTYC has grave concerns about the exclusive emphasis on phonics, particularly in Year 1. The use of "phonically decodable texts that do not require the use of other strategies to work out words" will impoverish children's literacy learning, and delay the development of their grasp of a wide vocabulary, which is an essential component of being able to recognise words. Proficient readers all read eventually by recognising sight words, not by using phonics which is a slow strategy which inhibits fluent reading and therefore inhibits comprehension. While phonics is a valuable tool when encountering words not recognised by sight, it is important that children also develop an understanding that not all words in English are decodable, and develop their ability to read by sight recognition.

Immersion in meaningful and enjoyable texts is an essential element in literacy learning right from the start, and limiting this will undermine children's progress and their motivation to read. It will thus not lead to a rise in standards in reading (decoding as well as comprehension) and will result in lower standards in spelling.

The recommendations of Subject Associations and phase specialists should be taken seriously, especially in relation to the level of expectations.

Breadth in the curriculum would be strengthened by more emphasis on the foundation subjects, which need more structure and rigour and coherence.

The school curriculum needs to be highlighted as a means of ensuring relevance.

The aims of the curriculum should be developed by adding statements about the importance of the promotion of positive attitudes to learning.

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

Comments:

The most important aspect of the curriculum for all young children is relevance; new learning links best to what they already know or are interested in and extends it across all relevant areas of learning. This means that, particularly in Key Stage 1, content and approach must be tailored to individual levels of understanding. It is children in the protected characteristic groups who will suffer most through the lack of flexibility due to the prescriptive content, which makes it hard for their teachers to interpret the curriculum in appropriate ways. The downgrading of spoken language disadvantages pupils who are in the early stages of learning English, and many who have special needs, and the lack of attention to personal development and wellbeing has a disproportionate effect on disadvantaged children.

The children with SEN, particularly those who have developmental delays, will face a formalised curriculum too early without sufficient opportunity to develop the underpinning skills in a developmentally appropriate way.

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?

Comments:

Children whose families take an interest in their education generally do better at school socially as well as academically. It should be an accepted part of the school's responsibility to ensure that parents have knowledge of the curriculum, and also a realistic insight into their child's level of understanding. This involves more than information about content; it would be helpful if the new primary national curriculum made it clear to all that learning involves much more than factual content. made stronger statements about children's personal and social, communication and language development and explicitly recognised the varying rates of development within each child as well as between different pupils. An acknowledgement of the importance of consolidation is desirable at all stages, but is non-negotiable in the early years.

The element of the curriculum that will be designed by the school has the potential to engage parents as well as children, and help them to reinforce ways in which literacy and numeracy can be strengthened through cross-curricular work. There will be, however, little time within the school day to develop this important aspect of the curriculum or indeed to do justice to the foundation subjects.

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

Comments:

Schools will need to ensure a smooth transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1, which will involve close liaison and a good understanding of early years pedagogy in Key Stage 1. There is a need to review the foundation subjects and cross curricular links to ensure that there is greater coherence and structure across the curriculum as a whole. Small schools with mixed age group classes covering two or more year groups have a particular challenge as the current proposals are not flexible enough to accommodate the required content in addition to the developmental differences and wide range of ability and of prior achievement within the classes.

The timeframe is already very tight. Consultation, let alone implementation, should be paused until proposals for assessment are made public, as these will influence schools' priorities

heavily. Time must also be allowed for professional development and discussion to allow schools to construct a coherent curriculum.

There is a stark contrast between the rhetoric of professional freedom and the reality of central control, especially in relation to schools in the maintained sector.

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

Comments:

This is increasingly problematic as the infrastructure available to support schools with curriculum implementation is now extremely limited. More decisions will rest on headteachers who are unlikely to have enough spare capacity to make informed choices about appropriate training and resources, especially in small schools where they have a teaching as well as a management role.

Local Authority support staff, where they have been retained, know the schools in their area, and are generally best placed to develop resources and support curriculum development. Their charges are considerably more affordable than private providers demand, and offer better value in terms of relevance to individual schools and their particular communities.

Higher Education Institutions, particularly those involved in initial training at all levels, are also well placed to provide effective CPD and to develop the resources schools will need.

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?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

14 Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the proposals in this consultation?

Comments:

The proposals for Key Stage 1 are overloaded on content at the expense of child initiated exploration and learning. Pupils in the countries that have higher measured outcomes of achievement at the end of primary and secondary school, and score more highly on general wellbeing, do not start formal education until they are around six years old. We have a very early school starting age in the UK, now compounded by annual entry which means that most children enter primary school at the age of four in England. Although the reception year is deemed to be part of the Early Years Foundation Stage, research by TACTYC has found that the learning experiences on offer are too often constrained by a lack of awareness of child development leading to inappropriate expectations, compounded by externally imposed requirements to focus on phonics and other formal activities at the expense of active learning. At this stage, children need to develop the communication skills and physical and social competences which underpin later more formal learning. Intellectual development is more relevant than academic learning in the early years, and is indeed the necessary foundation for later success. There is a wealth of evidence going back over decades which shows that a responsive approach is needed for effective teaching up to at least the end of Year 1. This is one of the reasons behind Cathy Nutbrown's recommendation for a new Early Years teaching qualification focusing strongly on pedagogy, starting from birth and continuing to age 7, thus deliberately including Key Stage 1 as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The current proposals for the primary national curriculum, and indeed the government response to Professor Nutbrown's review of qualifications, reveal a worrying lack of insight into

effective care and education in the early years, and will do little to advance young children's learning. The detailed prescriptions for English and Maths in particular ignore the importance of communication and exploration, and the power of emergent reading, writing and calculation. Expected standards that are pitched too high for many of the children result in disaffection and misdiagnosis of SEN in many pupils who are not necessarily less able, but less experienced and less mature, because younger. It has been shown that children who start formal reading at the age of seven reach similar standards at eleven as those who start at five; they are less likely to be turned off literacy as they can deal with the complexities and inconsistencies of the English language better later.

It is relatively easy to legislate for teaching, but instruction is only effective when learning takes place. In classrooms dominated by specific learning outcomes and teachers talking, it is very easy for learning to become something which is passive and not necessarily understood or retained. Teachers need to understand the nature of children's learning, and to appreciate that new knowledge is best internalised when it is linked with what children already know and to their interests. Freedom of movement, especially in outdoor spaces, offers opportunities for children to learn independently and to be more creative, inquiring and socially skilled, as they can pursue their own lines of interest and talk and work together. The curriculum proposals would be stronger if this were recognised, and there were coherent links across subjects, which are better thought of as overlapping areas of learning in the early years. Skilled teaching builds on this, as records of children's learning journeys show.

15 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand, complete etc.)

Comments:

It is easy to find the consultation but difficult to complete it due to the lack of information on proposals for assessment, and the nature of the questions which are predicated on flawed ideas for curriculum change. These are generally contrary to expert advice and known professional views.

The timing of the consultation is particularly difficult for serving teachers, especially as there are further consultations on other significant topics which compete for time and attention.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply x

E-mail address for acknowledgement: mwendyscott@btopenworld.com

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be all right if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 16 April 2013

Send by post to:

Consultation Unit,
Area 1c,
Castle View House,
East Lane,
Runcorn,
Cheshire,
WA7 2GJ.

Send by e-mail to: NationalCurriculum.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk