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Statutory guidance

# National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4

Updated 2 December 2014

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1

This document sets out the framework for the national curriculum and includes:

- contextual information about both the overall school curriculum and the statutory national curriculum, including the statutory basis of the latter
- aims for the statutory national curriculum
- statements on inclusion, and on the development of pupils' competence in numeracy and mathematics, language and literacy across the school curriculum
- programmes of study for all the national curriculum subjects

## 2. The school curriculum in England

### 2.1

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based\* and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life

\*See Section 78 of the 2002 Education Act (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/section/78>) which applies to all maintained schools. Academies are also required to offer a broad and balanced curriculum in accordance with Section 1 of the 2010 Academies Act (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/section/1>).

### 2.2

The school curriculum comprises all learning and other experiences that each school plans for its pupils. The national curriculum forms one part of the school curriculum.

### 2.3

All state schools are also required to make provision for a daily act of collective worship and must teach religious education to pupils at every key stage and sex and relationship education to pupils in secondary education.

### 2.4

Maintained schools in England are legally required to follow the statutory national curriculum which sets out in programmes of study, on the basis of key stages, subject content for those subjects that should be taught to all pupils. All schools must publish their school curriculum by subject and academic year online\*\*.

**\*\***From September 2012, all schools are required to publish information in relation to each academic year, relating to the content of the school's curriculum for each subject and details about how additional information relating to the curriculum may be obtained:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1124/made> (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1124/made>).

## 2.5

All schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), drawing on good practice. Schools are also free to include other subjects or topics of their choice in planning and designing their own programme of education.

## 3. The national curriculum in England

### Aims

#### 3.1

The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said, and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.

#### 3.2

The national curriculum is just one element in the education of every child. There is time and space in the school day and in each week, term and year to range beyond the national curriculum specifications. The national curriculum provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum.

### Structure

#### 3.3

Pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools, including community special schools and foundation special schools, and in voluntary-aided and voluntary-controlled schools, must follow the national curriculum. It is organised on the basis of 4 key stages<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and 12 subjects, classified in legal terms as 'core' and 'other foundation' subjects.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>The key stage 2 programmes of study for English, mathematics and science are presented in this document as 'lower' (years 3 and 4) and 'upper' (years 5 and 6). This distinction is made as guidance for teachers and is not reflected in legislation. The legal requirement is to cover the content of the programmes of study for years 3 to 6 by the end of key stage 2.

#### 3.4

The Secretary of State for Education is required to publish programmes of study for each national curriculum subject, setting out the 'matters, skills and processes' to be taught at each key stage. Schools are free to choose how they organise their school day, as long as the content of the national curriculum programmes of study is taught to all pupils.

### 3.5

The structure of the national curriculum, in terms of which subjects are compulsory at each key stage, is set out in the table below:

Figure 1 – Structure of the national curriculum

	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
Age	5-7	7-11	11-14	14-16
Year groups	1-2	3-6	7-9	10-11
Core subjects				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foundation subjects				
Art and design	✓	✓	✓	
Citizenship			✓	✓
Computing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and technology	✓	✓	✓	
Languages		✓	✓	
Geography	✓	✓	✓	
History	✓	✓	✓	
Music	✓	✓	✓	
Physical education	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: At key stage 2 the subject title for languages is ‘foreign language’; at key stage 3 it is ‘modern foreign language’.

### 3.6

All schools are also required to teach religious education at all key stages. Secondary schools must provide sex and relationship education.

Figure 2 – Statutory teaching of religious education and sex and relationship education

	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
Age	5-7	7-11	11-14	14-16
Year groups	1-2	3-6	7-9	10-11
Religious education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sex and relationship education			✓	✓

## Key stage 4 entitlement areas

### 3.7

The arts (comprising art and design, music, dance, drama and media arts), design and technology, the humanities (comprising geography and history) and modern foreign language are not compulsory national curriculum subjects after the age of 14, but all pupils in maintained schools have a statutory entitlement to be able to study a subject in each of those 4 areas.

### 3.8

The statutory requirements in relation to the entitlement areas are:

- schools must provide access to a minimum of 1 course in each of the 4 entitlement areas
- schools must provide the opportunity for pupils to take a course in all 4 areas, should they wish to do so
- a course that meets the entitlement requirements must give pupils the opportunity to obtain an approved qualification

## 4. Inclusion

### Setting suitable challenges

#### 4.1

Teachers should set high expectations for every pupil. They should plan stretching work for pupils whose attainment is significantly above the expected standard. They have an even greater obligation to plan lessons for pupils who have low levels of prior attainment or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teachers should use appropriate assessment to set targets which are deliberately ambitious.

### Responding to pupils' needs and overcoming potential barriers for individuals and groups of pupils

#### 4.2

Teachers should take account of their duties under equal opportunities legislation that covers race, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.

Note: Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 but it is not applicable to schools in relation to education or (as far as relating to those under the age of 18) the provision of services; it is a relevant protected characteristic in relation to the provision of services or employment (so when thinking about staff). Marriage and civil partnership are also a protected characteristic but only in relation to employment.

### **4.3**

A wide range of pupils have special educational needs, many of whom also have disabilities. Lessons should be planned to ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving. In many cases, such planning will mean that these pupils will be able to study the full national curriculum. The special educational needs and disability code of practice (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>) includes advice on approaches to identification of need which can support this. A minority of pupils will need access to specialist equipment and different approaches. The SEN and disability code of practice is clear about what should be done to meet their needs.

### **4.4**

With the right teaching, that recognises their individual needs, many disabled pupils may have little need for additional resources beyond the aids which they use as part of their daily life. Teachers must plan lessons so that these pupils can study every national curriculum subject. Potential areas of difficulty should be identified and addressed at the outset of work.

### **4.5**

Teachers must also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Monitoring of progress should take account of the pupil's age, length of time in this country, previous educational experience and ability in other languages.

### **4.6**

The ability of pupils for whom English is an additional language to take part in the national curriculum may be in advance of their communication skills in English. Teachers should plan teaching opportunities to help pupils develop their English and should aim to provide the support pupils need to take part in all subjects.

## **5. Numeracy and mathematics**

### **5.1**

Teachers should use every relevant subject to develop pupils' mathematical fluency. Confidence in numeracy and other mathematical skills is a precondition of success across the national curriculum.

### **5.2**

Teachers should develop pupils' numeracy and mathematical reasoning in all subjects so that they understand and appreciate the importance of mathematics. Pupils should be taught to apply arithmetic fluently to problems, understand and use measures, make estimates and sense check their work. Pupils should apply their geometric and algebraic understanding, and relate their understanding of probability to the notions of risk and uncertainty. They should also understand the cycle of collecting, presenting and analysing data. They should be taught to apply their mathematics to both routine and non-routine problems, including breaking down more complex problems into a series of simpler steps.

## **6. Language and literacy**

### **6.1**

Teachers should develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for pupils, understanding the language provides access to the whole curriculum. Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects.

### **Spoken language**

#### **6.2**

Pupils should be taught to speak clearly and convey ideas confidently using standard English. They should learn to justify ideas with reasons; ask questions to check understanding; develop vocabulary and build knowledge; negotiate; evaluate and build on the ideas of others; and select the appropriate register for effective communication. They should be taught to give well-structured descriptions and explanations and develop their understanding through speculating, hypothesising and exploring ideas. This will enable them to clarify their thinking as well as organise their ideas for writing.

### **Reading and writing**

#### **6.3**

Teachers should develop pupils' reading and writing in all subjects to support their acquisition of knowledge. Pupils should be taught to read fluently, understand extended prose (both fiction and non-fiction) and be encouraged to read for pleasure. Schools should do everything to promote wider reading. They should provide library facilities and set ambitious expectations for reading at home. Pupils should develop the stamina and skills to write at length, with accurate spelling and punctuation. They should be taught the correct use of grammar. They should build on what they have been taught to expand the range of their writing and the variety of the grammar they use. The writing they do should include narratives, explanations, descriptions, comparisons, summaries and evaluations: such writing supports them in rehearsing, understanding and consolidating what they have heard or read.

### **Vocabulary development**

#### **6.4**

Pupils' acquisition and command of vocabulary are key to their learning and progress across the whole curriculum. Teachers should therefore develop vocabulary actively, building systematically on pupils' current knowledge. They should increase pupils' store of words in general. Simultaneously, they should also make links between known and new vocabulary and discuss the shades of meaning in similar



words. In this way, pupils expand the vocabulary choices that are available to them when they write. In addition, it is vital for pupils' comprehension that they understand the meanings of words they meet in their reading across all subjects, and older pupils should be taught the meaning of instruction verbs that they may meet in examination questions. It is particularly important to induct pupils into the language which defines each subject in its own right, such as accurate mathematical and scientific language.

## 7. Programmes of study and attainment targets

### 7.1

The following links set out the statutory programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects except for science at key stage 4.

- English (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>)
- mathematics (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study>)
- science (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-science-programmes-of-study>)
- art and design (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-art-and-design-programmes-of-study>)
- citizenship (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study>)
- computing (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-computing-programmes-of-study>)
- design and technology (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-design-and-technology-programmes-of-study>)
- geography (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-geography-programmes-of-study>)
- history (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study>)
- languages (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-programmes-of-study>)
- music (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study>)
- physical education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-physical-education-programmes-of-study>)

Schools are not required by law to teach the example content in [square brackets] or the content indicated as being 'non-statutory'.

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