

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM

Interim Report Consultation Analysis

Introduction

This report has been based on 300 responses to the interim report. The interim report invited responses, however, respondents were not asked to return a questionnaire or submit comments to a particular format or to restrict comments to the provisional recommendations.

The organisational breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Head-teacher/Teacher/Asst Head-teacher	72
Professional organisation/Representative body/Association	57
Educationalist/Consultant/Researcher	28
Charity	28
Individual	25
Lecturer/Higher Education/Further Education	23
School	16
Parent	14
Local Authority/Children & Young Peoples Services	10
Other*	10
Early Years	9
Governor	8

**Those which fell into the 'other' category included those who did not specify a type, Trusts, Limited companies, and a Commission.*

The report starts with an overview, followed by a summary analysis of each of the six main areas of in the interim report, ie The National Curriculum and Curriculum review, Curriculum Design and Content, Literacy, Numeracy and ICT, Personal Development, Transition and Progression and Languages and the provisional recommendations.

Overview

Most respondents welcomed the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum and recognised that the provisional recommendations set out in the interim report would benefit children's learning across the curriculum by its emphasis on active, cross curricular learning and reduced curriculum content. They believed the proposals signalled an improvement on the current primary curriculum, and agreed with the desire to develop a strong and coherent curriculum which encouraged creativity and provided a firm foundation for all children.

A number of respondents expressed concern that design and technology (D & T) was not one of the areas of learning. They expressed concern that placing D & T into two areas (science and technological understanding and understanding the arts and design) would reduce its content and meaningful experience. They also believed putting D & T into one area rather than the proposed two areas would make teachers planning and teaching more manageable and coherent.

The majority of respondents said the introduction of a new curriculum must be supported by a programme of continuous professional development (CPD) for senior leaders and teachers. They also suggested it was essential that teachers were fully supported to develop subject expertise through effective and re-designed teacher training programmes.

Most respondents welcomed the recommendation that play-based approaches should be extended into key stage 1 (KS1), and that teachers were best placed to make professional judgements on the balance struck between these pedagogical decisions. They were of the opinion that creative approaches to education, based on professional knowledge and decision-making were vital to ensure the aspirations of the new curriculum.

Respondents from the independent sector were concerned about the intended statutory scope of the national curriculum as an entitlement for all children. It was mentioned that legislation in relation to the current National Curriculum did not include independent schools, and that which was related to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) did. They asked for assurances that the statutory requirements relating to EYFS would not be imposed on the National Curriculum in independent schools.

Many respondents had mixed views on the review's proposal that there should be a single point of entry to the reception class. Although most respondents supported the proposal that children should enter in the September following their fourth birthday, many were concerned that there was no research or evidence to suggest early entry to school was beneficial to a child's overall well-being.

Some respondents praised the aims that were recommended in the Cambridge Primary Review as they recognised the interdependence of individuals and society and of educational processes and outcomes for individuals.

A few respondents were concerned that the six areas of learning proposed in the interim report appeared to have been decided and that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) were already working on the detail. They felt the short timescale meant that there was little time to engage fully in the consultation.

Summary

The National Curriculum and curriculum review - Recommendations 1 and 2

The majority of respondents commenting on recommendation 1 fully supported the proposal that a national curriculum should be retained as an entitlement for all children. They mentioned that if a national curriculum was kept it would be less likely that children would have 'gaps' in their learning when they moved schools.

Respondents specifically approved of the positive tone of the report. They said the report represented an encouraging move in the right direction towards achieving the aims of the curriculum and the criteria established in the remit letter.

The vast majority of respondents commenting on areas of learning approved of the move away from strict divisions of subjects to a mixture of both challenging subject teaching and cross curricular teaching and organisation. However the following reservations were raised:

- Concern that a hierarchy of areas of learning or individual subjects within areas may develop. Respondents said it should be made clear that the sub-headings used in describing the curriculum did not prescribe the headings for the periods into which the timetable was divided
- Cross-curricular approaches must be based on a sound understanding of the different subject's specific contribution to the chosen study area
- Without rigorous planning, cross-curricular work would not be effective in terms of skill development and progression
- Cross-curricular studies should not be confused with topic work and the relative weightings of the six areas and of subjects within each area should be made explicit. The final report must convey a rationale so teachers could fully understand the six areas, and avoid creating restrictive silos that would prevent teachers making links between areas as well as within them
- There should not be a narrow focus on literacy and numeracy with all other subjects being defined as cross-curricular.

Most respondents commenting on recommendation 2 agreed that the curriculum review should become a pro-active strategy whereby EYFS and the statutory curriculum were reviewed at agreed intervals as a whole, rather than as separate phases reviewed out of sequence. They believed this would assure stability in which to achieve curricular aims, help schools in planning and organising children's learning, and would make links between phases to enable smoother progression.

Respondents endorsed the assertion that '*an important aim of primary education is to instil a love of learning for its own sake*'. Respondents said in order to achieve this, the primary curriculum needed to provide children with time and space to develop as individuals, and at their own pace. They mentioned that a 'love of learning' would also depend on children being encouraged to make meaningful choices in their curriculum, and this in turn required teacher's to be empowered to enable such choices. Respondents also suggested that to ensure a love of learning, child initiated enquiry and extended study should be a driving force in the new curriculum.

Curriculum design and content - Recommendations 3 to 6

153 respondents commented on these recommendations. They felt that a flexible and manageable curriculum was an essential component of successful primary education, and flexibility and freedom to innovate must be at the cornerstone of a new order. Respondents believed that the review presented opportunities to tailor the curriculum to individual children, and welcomed the chance to re-design the curriculum and shape it to meet children's needs. It was mentioned that there should be no restrictive recommendations of how much time should be devoted to each subject or area of learning. Schools must be given ownership and must be able to match their individual needs to curriculum delivery to ensure that high quality educational provision was available for all children.

The majority of respondents commenting on recommendation 4 welcomed the proposal that the curriculum should be mediated through 'challenging subject teaching and equally challenging cross-curricular studies'. Respondents said this would allow subject teaching to be subsumed into class teaching at the early stages of a child's learning, and become more discrete as they progressed. Then alongside this, schools could plan cross-curricular approaches and events to allow children to make connections in their learning and apply knowledge and understanding across a range of situations.

Respondents supported the QCA working with subject associations (recommendation 5). They said the proposal to secure progression in learning of the key subject areas was welcome and would help teachers plan for effective learning through both cross-curricular and dedicated skills subject teaching.

Respondents fully supported having a set of over-arching agreed aims and values, and said this would be essential to inform the development of the new curriculum, (recommendation 3). They said that these aims should be an integral part of curriculum design. It was also suggested that whilst the aims and values adopted by the new secondary curriculum provided a useful starting place and acknowledged a common set of aims and values across the stages, it would be useful to consider inclusion of a distinct primary dimension which also linked to the EYFS.

The majority of respondents commenting on recommendation 6 agreed that, for the purposes of planning a continuous and progressive curriculum, the new primary curriculum should be divided into three two year stages as opposed to the current key stage 1 (KS1) and key stage 2 (KS2). Respondents mentioned a potential benefit of this structural proposal was the extension of the EYFS into year 1, as this would aid transition and provide an appropriate curriculum for those children who had not achieved the early learning goals by the end of reception. Respondents also suggested that this would allow for year 1 and year 2 teachers to work much more closely with foundation stage teachers, would help to establish an appropriate balance between subject/themed approaches, and could help schools with mixed age groups.

A small minority did not agree with the idea of three two year phases of learning as proposed, and said all available research had shown that times of transition inhibited learning rather than enhanced it. Respondents mentioned:

- 3 phases would only help if the last phase moved towards the secondary

curriculum

- Any division of the curriculum into phases must be limited to teacher support materials and guidance only, so that schools could choose to use it if they judged it useful.

Many respondents believed there were serious constraints imposed by KS2 tests, and said it was not possible to develop an outstanding primary curriculum without full consideration to the implications of the national system of assessment. It was mentioned that the current testing regime forced schools to devote a disproportionate amount of time to teaching the 'basics' at the expense of other areas of learning. Respondents were of the opinion that the current statutory testing system had resulted in a lack of trust at all levels, and a lack of pupil autonomy, creativity, motivation and well-being.

Respondents said the proposed six areas of learning were likely to lead to a more coherent and relevant curriculum with greater continuity. Respondents thought the six areas would ease transition from the foundation stage into KS1 and would allow schools maximum flexibility for planning cross-curricular studies.

A number of different issues were raised about organising the new curriculum on six broad areas of learning. They raised issues about the content in the six areas. The following issues were mentioned:

- The framework for the areas of learning was key. Respondents said care must be taken in implementation so teachers did not interpret areas of learning as 'topic' work and revert back to practice that had been discredited
- Concern that basic skills in art would go untaught and underdeveloped. Positioning art within 'understanding the arts and design' area of learning was sensible but respondents were unsure if teachers were able to link it with subjects in other areas of learning
- The report gave little vision for a science as a core area in the future of the primary curriculum
- In secondary education 'design' was used in 'design and technology' and 'art and design', it was practically impossible to persuade these two groups of subject specialists to work together successfully
- The areas of learning in the review were bound to soften the boundaries between subjects.
- 'Human social and environmental understanding' lacked definition and did not imply a historical dimension. The final report must ensure the teaching and learning of history retained a cornerstone in the new primary history curriculum
- Understanding of food and nutrition as emphasised with the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda on healthy individuals, did not sit comfortably with the six areas suggested and would make it increasingly unlikely that it would be taught
- 'Understanding physical health and well-being' did not reflect some aspects of economic well-being and financial capability
- The science and technological understanding area did not appear to give dedicated space in the curriculum where children could learn to take the initiative and gain the practical know-how to help shape the world of the

future.

It was suggested that the final report needed to place greater emphasis on the value of learning outside the classroom as a tool for childhood development. Respondents said outdoor learning was a vehicle for wider teaching and learning styles to deliver the curriculum. They also mentioned that environmental literacy had not been considered in the report.

9 respondents commenting on the proposals to organise the curriculum around six areas of learning felt it would not deliver a more efficient and modern curriculum. They suggested it would be prescriptive and would further limit the extent to which some foundation subjects were taught.

Literacy, numeracy and ICT - Recommendations 7 and 8

83 responses commented directly on recommendations 7 and 8.

Over half of those commenting fully supported recommendation 7 and welcomed the priority given to literacy and numeracy. Many were particularly pleased that literacy included reading writing speaking and listening, and strongly endorsed the report's emphasis on spoken language as an essential requirement for access to the curriculum and for the development of reading and writing. Respondents said difficulties with expression and receptive communication were significant barriers to achievement as they affected all aspects of learning.

Respondents supported both parts of recommendation 8. They agreed with the introduction of aspects of the key stage 3 (KS3) ICT curriculum at KS2. Respondents believed that technology formed a vital part of a modern education and that children must develop IT skills during primary education in order for them to be independent learners of the future.

Respondents said it was good to see drama recommended as a major teaching methodology in the interim report. They felt that recognition of drama was important and embedding learning through role play provided a meaningful way for children to practice their skills in speaking, listening and applying their knowledge.

A small number of respondents said that improvements to ICT could not be delivered without significant investment. Some were concerned that too much screen-based technology at an early age could interfere with some children's development; such as a reduction in attention skills and their ability to acquire literacy or reading skills.

Respondents welcomed the decision to have a 'mathematical understanding' area of learning in the new primary curriculum. Some mentioned that they would prefer the recommendations to promote a priority in 'mathematical understanding' as opposed to 'numeracy'. Respondents welcomed the fact that the interim report recognised that financial awareness was one of the important matters of a child's understanding

Personal development - Recommendation 9

105 responses commented on this recommendation. Those commenting fully supported both parts of recommendation 9 i.e. to:

- 9(i) Strengthen provision by building a framework based on the successful SEAL programme , and
- 9(ii) Set out essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes for personal health and social education (PHSE) alongside physical education in ‘understanding physical health and well-being’.

Respondents also mentioned that as well as attributes such as teamwork, flexibility and empathy, the final report must emphasise values such as respect, relationships, honesty, thoughtfulness and morality.

Some respondents were concerned that the review appeared to restrict play-based learning to the early years. They believed that play-based learning was an essential part of all learning, and was valuable throughout the primary years well beyond key stage 1. Respondents were of the opinion that play-based learning involved creativity, appropriate risk-taking, problem solving and learning by reflecting on successes and other outcomes.

Respondents welcomed the emphasis on personal development being part of the core of a child’s learning and believed PSHE had been previously subjected to piecemeal treatment because it had not been a compulsory part of the school curriculum. Respondents said in line with the children’s plan, schools must play a central role in supporting children’s personal, social, physical and emotional development.

Respondents thought personal development should move beyond ‘understanding physical health and well-being’ and should support children to become proactive, creative and morally aware citizens. Issues mentioned included:

- Global learning – children were growing up in a complex globalised world and need to be able to make the connections between their own lives and those of others throughout the world. Respondents said they should be taught about issues that affected the world such as poverty, climate change, human rights and conflict
- Citizenship - respondents said this had not received a high enough profile in primary schools and active citizenship must not be lost within the new curriculum
- Understanding physical health and well-being should be re-titled to indicate the intended inclusion of personal and social values (including moral and cultural values) in education

A number of people responded on behalf of the Association for Physical Education. They said it was essential that every child had the right to be physically educated as part of their educational entitlement, and believed that physical education should be at the core of the primary school curriculum, alongside literacy and numeracy with ‘physical education health and emotion well-being’ as a statutory requirement.

A small number of respondents expressed concern with building a framework based on the SEAL programme. Respondents believed SEAL had been developed as an attendance and behaviour model and not a personal model, and much of the material was not in keeping with the concepts of cross-curricular learning and the integrated learning experiences which the review was promoting.

Transition and progression - Recommendations 10 to 15

113 responses commented specifically to these recommendations. The majority fully supported recommendation 10, and said it was essential to have a single entry point to ensure there were equal opportunities for all children regardless of which month in the year they were born. Respondents mentioned that a 'split intake' had the effect of children entering year 1 with significantly less schooling than other children, and the effect of this sometimes carried through their whole school life. It was suggested that having a single entry point would have a major impact on raising levels of achievement for spring and summer born children.

A significant minority did not agree with the review's proposal that there should be a single point of entry to the reception class. Respondents were of the opinion that there was no research or evidence to suggest that early entry to school was beneficial to a child's overall well-being. They also believed this would not be easy to implement successfully, and would restrict parental choice and flexibility in start dates for children entering primary school. Some were concerned that summer born children who started school at the age of four could suffer serious stress and anxiety.

Most respondents fully supported recommendation 11, which proposed that play-based approaches to learning should be extended into KS 1. Respondents believed this would allow for flexible, creative approaches to education, based on professional knowledge and decision-making. Respondents were of the opinion that play was vital to a child's development and helped children to adjust to school settings and enhanced their creativity, readiness to learn and improved behaviour.

Some respondents said that in order for teachers and support staff to exercise their professional judgement to determine how to provide play in the most appropriate way based on play work principles, they would need access to appropriate professional development to enable them to plan for play opportunities relating to the new curriculum.

Respondents fully agreed with the focus on improving transition and curriculum progression from the foundation stage to KS1. They said the jump from the early years into formal primary education was a difficult transition, and it was re-assuring that the report was exploring ways in which primary education could be dove-tailed with the EYFS to help young children deal with this transition. Respondents believed that the reception year was an intrinsic part of the EYFS and children should therefore continue to follow the EYFS. It was mentioned that too many reception classes were currently following a year 1 curriculum and children were struggling to achieve this level.

Respondents were fully supportive of the move to ensure effective implementation of the principles of personalised learning, (recommendation 12). However respondents asked that the final report should set out clearly what was meant by personalised learning, as phrases such as 'one-to-one' teaching should not appear without clarification of what was meant.

Respondents fully supported recommendation 14 which proposed that all KS1 teachers should be involved in the moderation of EYFS profile assessments within schools to increase their understanding. Respondents suggested that all KS1

teachers should receive training in the use, completion and interpretation of the EYFS profile in order to aid transition between EYFS and the National Curriculum.

Those commenting on recommendation 13 agreed that the QCA should make sure that guidance on the revised primary national curriculum built on the learning that had taken place in the EYFS. They said it was essential that a child's education was seen as a continuum and not something that stopped and started again at different phases.

Respondents to recommendation 15 said proposals to improve continuity between KS2 and KS3 were to be welcomed.

Languages - Recommendations 16 to 20

68 responses commented on these recommendations.

The vast majority of respondents fully supported recommendation 16 and thought that the active promotion of links between languages and English were of paramount importance. They believed linking modern foreign languages (MFL) with literacy raised the status of MFL, and this in turn could support literacy where explicit links were explored. They also believed embedding MFL through role play and drama provided a meaningful avenue for speaking and listening opportunities for children in learning a modern language.

Most respondents fully supported recommendation 17 and said it would be sufficient for primary schools to offer one or two languages. They agreed with the caution in the report against a superficial approach involving too many languages at the expense of progression. A minority of respondents felt that the focus on teaching just one or two languages over four years was prescriptive and unworkable. It was suggested that a multi-lingual alternative should be offered, and respondents emphasised the importance of keeping as open as possible the choice of languages to be studied by KS2 children.

A number of respondents said the place of community languages needed clarification. They believed the recommendation that schools should focus on *'teaching those languages which children will be taught in key stage 3'* appeared to exclude community languages. They said community languages could be taught in secondary schools in KS3 particularly if there was a demand.

Respondents raised the following issues about the transition of languages between the primary and secondary stages and the choice of language primary schools should be free to choose:

- Respondents mentioned that they fed in to many different secondary schools that had a range of main languages, so the primary experience would be wasted if the languages introduced in the primary school could not be continued in the secondary school
- KS2/KS3 level descriptors did not align – they focused on different things
- Were concerned that the current national curriculum levels were written for KS3 not KS2, and KS2 languages were being dictated to
- Respondents were sceptical about children reaching similar national curriculum levels in languages as in other subjects by KS2. They were

concerned that judging a KS2 pupil by KS3 criteria moved outside the KS2 framework and language ladder

- Were of the opinion that KS2 teachers did not have the necessary linguistic expertise.

Respondents fully supported recommendation 18 which said schools should be free to choose the language(s) that they wished to teach. Respondents said primary schools must take into account the views of secondary schools, parents and staff in making this decision, and teacher competence, sustainability and transition were critical factors in making this choice.

Respondents fully supported recommendation 19 which proposed the delivery of language teaching through workforce development programmes should continue at the current level of funding.

Respondents fully supported recommendation 20, and agreed that a survey by Ofsted of how well schools were managing the introduction of languages as a compulsory subject should take place no later than 2014.

Some respondents would prefer to see monitoring by Ofsted completed through the normal inspection regime rather than through additional surveys (recommendation 20)