

Chapter 1: The National Curriculum

Section 1: The school curriculum and the National Curriculum for key stages 3 and 4

WHERE AND WHEN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM APPLIES

www.nc.uk.net/home

The National Curriculum (NC) applies to pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools, including community special schools and foundation special schools, and voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools. It is organised on the basis of four key stages, two of which are applicable to secondary schools.

Key stage 3	Age 11–14	Year groups 7–9
Key stage 4	Age 14–16	Year groups 10–11

Key stages 3 and 4 NC core subjects:

- English;
- mathematics;
- science.

Key stage 3 NC non-core foundation subjects:

- design and technology;
- information and communication technology;
- history
- geography
- modern foreign languages;
- art and design;
- music;
- physical education;
- citizenship (statutory from August 2002).

Key stage 4 NC non-core foundation subjects:

- design and technology;
- information and communication technology;
- modern foreign languages;
- physical education;
- citizenship (statutory from August 2002).

For possible modifications at key stage 4, see *The National Curriculum Handbook for secondary teachers in England*, pp17–18: www.nc.uk.net

Additional statutory areas

Religious education

Schools must provide religious education (RE) for all registered pupils, although parents can choose to withdraw their children. Schools, other than voluntary aided schools and those with a religious character, must teach RE according to the locally agreed syllabus. Each agreed syllabus should reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

Sex education

Secondary schools must provide sex education for their pupils. It must include teaching about AIDS, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and be given in such a way as to encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life. The detailed content and nature of sex education is for schools to decide. Parents can choose to withdraw their children from all or part of sex education.

Careers education

All schools must provide a programme of careers education for pupils during Years 9, 10 and 11 and an appropriate range of careers information. They must also allow officers from the careers service access to pupils at key decision-making points during their education. Schools are encouraged to provide careers education for pupils before Year 9 and for those in the sixth form.

DfEE circulars 5/97 and 5/98 provide guidance for schools on meeting the statutory requirements. QCA guidance for schools and colleges complements the DfEE circulars: *Learning outcomes from careers education and guidance (QCA/99/359)*.

Non-statutory area

Promoting personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Guidelines are provided in the *National Curriculum Handbook for secondary teachers in England*, pages 188–197. The guidelines are provided to help schools establish coherence and consistency and to promote curriculum continuity and progression in pupils' learning in PSHE. These complement the requirements for citizenship (statutory from August 2002).

The structure of the National Curriculum

For each subject and for each key stage, the programmes of study (PoS) set out what should be taught. Attainment targets (ATs) set out the expected standards of pupils' performance. It is for schools to choose how they organise their school curriculum to include the PoS.

Programmes of study

The PoS set out what pupils should be taught in each subject at each key stage, and provide the basis of planning schemes of work. When planning, schools should also consider the four general teaching requirements that apply across the PoS.

General requirements

There are four general teaching requirements:

See the *National Curriculum Handbook for secondary teachers in England*, pp32–42.
www.nc.uk.net/gen_teach.html

- Inclusion: providing effective learning opportunities for all children;
- Use of language across the curriculum;
- Use of ICT across the curriculum;
- Health and safety.

Additional guidance

The *Frameworks for teaching English, mathematics and science: Years 7, 8 and 9* (DfES) and the exemplar schemes of work (DfES and QCA) show how the PoS and ATs can be translated into practical, manageable teaching plans.

Attainment targets and level descriptions

¹As defined by the Education Act, 1996, section 353a

²In citizenship, expected performance for the majority of pupils at the end of key stages 3 and 4 is set out in end of key stage descriptions

³Including modern foreign languages

Assessing attainment at the end of a Key Stage 3

www.nc.uk.net/notes_34.html

Planning

www.nc.uk.net/notes_34.html#plan

Reporting

www.nc.uk.net/notes_34.html#report

Target setting

www.nc.uk.net/notes_34.html#target

An AT sets out the ‘*knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of each key stage*’¹. Except in the case of citizenship², ATs consist of eight level descriptions of increasing difficulty, plus a description for exceptional performance above level 8. Each level description describes the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate.

The level descriptions provide the basis for making judgements about pupils’ performance at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3. At key stage 4, national qualifications are the main means of assessing attainment in National Curriculum (NC) subjects.

Range of levels within which the great majority of pupils are expected to work		Expected attainment for the majority of pupils at the end of the key stage	
Key stage 1	1–3	at age 7	2
Key stage 2	2–5	at age 11	4
Key stage 3	3–7	at age 14	5/6 ³

In deciding on a pupil’s level of attainment at the end of a key stage, teachers should judge which description best fits the pupil’s performance. When doing so, each description should be considered alongside descriptions for adjacent levels.

Arrangements for statutory assessment at the end of key stage 3 are set out in detail in the QCA’s annual booklets about assessment and reporting arrangements.

The level descriptions are not designed to assess individual pieces of work. They list aspects of attainment, based on the programme of study (PoS), which teachers need to assess to build up a picture of a pupil’s performance over time in a range of contexts.

Teachers’ planning for schemes of work should start from the programme of study (PoS) and the needs and abilities of their pupils. Level descriptions can help to determine the degree of challenge and progression for work across each year of a key stage.

Teachers are required to report annually to parents on pupils’ progress. Although not designed to be used at the end of each year, the level descriptions can be used as a basis to describe pupils’ progress.

To support target setting for pupils who achieve significantly below age-related expectations, performance criteria have been developed for English and mathematics leading to level 1 and within levels 1 and 2. In addition, performance criteria have been developed for pupils’ personal and social development. These criteria were published in *Supporting the target setting process* (DfEE/QCA, 1998).

LINKS WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Scales used in approved national qualifications build on pupils' prior learning as set out in the PoS at key stage 3 and the level descriptions. Qualifications used by pupils of compulsory school age, whether in school, college or workplace, must be approved under section 400 of the Education Act, 1996. Approved qualifications are listed in the DfES circular sent annually to schools and colleges.

Pupils may be offered courses leading to the following qualifications:

- GCSE;
- GCSE (short course);
- Part One GNVQ at foundation and intermediate level;
- GNVQ (GNVQ units) at foundation, intermediate and advanced level;
- NVQ (or NVQ units) at levels 1 and 2 (approved titles only);
- Key Skills unit in information technology;
- Entry level qualifications;
- GCE AS level;
- Other approved qualifications.

LEARNING ACROSS THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

www.nc.uk.net/learn.html

Information about promoting aspects of the curriculum and skills across all subjects can be found in the *National Curriculum Handbook for secondary teachers in England* on pages 22–25 and in the subject sections.

Key skills

www.nc.uk.net/LACcs_keyskill.html

Six skill areas are described as key skills because they help learners improve their learning and performance in education, work and life. These key skills are embedded in the NC:

- Communication;
- Application of number;
- Information technology;
- Working with others;
- Improving own learning and performance;
- Problem solving.

Thinking skills

www.nc.uk.net/LACcs_thinkskill.html

By using thinking skills, children can focus on 'knowing how' as well as 'knowing what' – learning how to learn. The following thinking skills complement the key skills and are embedded in the NC.

- Information-processing skills;
- Reasoning skills;
- Enquiry skills;
- Creative and thinking skills;
- Evaluation skills.

Other aspects of the school curriculum

Other aspects of the school curriculum include:

- Financial capability;
- Enterprise and entrepreneurial skills;
- Work-related learning;
- Education for sustainable development.

Chapter 1: Section 2:

A common structure and design for all subjects

The programmes of study

This section is taken from pages 28–29 of the *National Curriculum Handbook for secondary teachers in England: key stages 3 and 4*

www.nc.uk.net/home

www.nc.uk.net/prog_study.html

The programmes of study for English, mathematics and science

The programmes of study in the non-core foundation subjects

Information in the margins

The National Curriculum programmes of study have been given a common structure and a common design.

In each subject, at each key stage, the main column **1** contains the programme of study, which sets out two sorts of requirements:

- **Knowledge, skills and understanding** **2** – what has to be taught in the subject during the key stage.
- **Breadth of study** **3** – the contexts, activities, areas of study and range of experiences through which the **Knowledge, skills and understanding** should be taught.

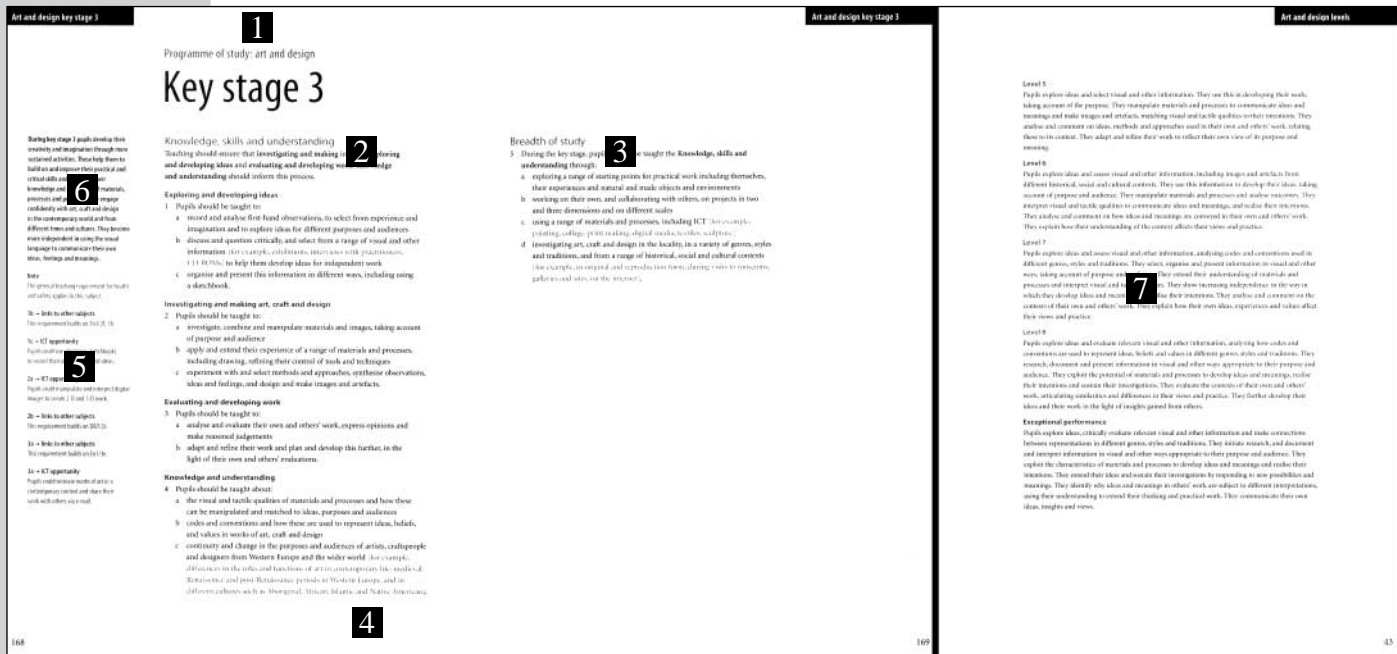
Schools are not required by law to teach the content in grey type. This includes the examples in the main column **4** [printed inside square brackets], all text in the margins **5** and information and examples in the inclusion statement. In the programmes of study, *italic type* is used to emphasise options, where schools and teachers can choose between requirements.

The programmes of study for English, mathematics and science contain sections that correspond directly to the attainment targets for each subject. In mathematics, this one-to-one correspondence does not hold for all key stages – see the mathematics programme of study for more information. In English, the three sections of the programme of study each contain **Breadth of study** requirements. In mathematics and science, there is a single, separate set of **Breadth of study** requirements for each key stage.

In these subjects (except for citizenship) the programme of study simply contains two sets of requirements – **Knowledge, skills and understanding** and **Breadth of study**. The programmes of study for citizenship contain no **Breadth of study** requirements.

At the start of each key stage, the margin begins with a summary **6** of the main things that pupils will learn during the key stage. The margins also contain four other types of non-statutory information:

- notes giving key information that should be taken into account when teaching the subject;
- notes giving definitions of words and phrases in the programmes of study;
- suggested opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) as they learn the subject;
- some key links with other subjects indicating connections between teaching requirements, and suggesting how a requirement in one subject can build on the requirements in another in the same key stage.



The referencing system

References work as follows:

A reference in...	...reads...	...and means...
Physical education key stage 2	11a, 11b → links to other subjects. These requirements build on Gg/2c.	Physical education key stage 2, requirements 11a and 11b build on geography (key stage 2), paragraph 2, requirement c.
Art and design key stage 1	4a → links to other subjects. This requirement builds on Ma3/2a, 2c, 2d.	Art and design key stage 1, requirement 4a builds on mathematics (key stage 1), Ma3 Shape, space and measures, paragraph 2, requirements a, c and d.
Citizenship key stage 3	1a → links to other subjects. This requirement builds on Hi/10, 13.	Citizenship key stage 3, requirement 1a builds on history (key stage 3) paragraphs 10 and 13.

The attainment targets

The attainment targets **7** are at the end of the *National Curriculum Handbook for secondary teachers in England: key stages 3 and 4*. They can be read alongside the programmes of study by folding out the booklet.