

Chapter 1: The National Curriculum

Section 1: The school curriculum and the National Curriculum for key stages 1 and 2

This section focuses on:

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|------------|---|------------|---|
| 1.1 | When and where the National Curriculum applies; | 1.4 | The structure of the National Curriculum; |
| 1.2 | Additional statutory areas of the curriculum; | 1.5 | The programmes of study; |
| 1.3 | Non-statutory areas of the curriculum; | 1.6 | The general teaching requirements; |
| | | 1.7 | Curriculum guidance. |

1.1 WHERE AND WHEN DOES THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM APPLY?

www.nc.uk.net/how_works.html

www.nc.uk.net/home.htm

The National Curriculum (NC) applies to children of compulsory school age in maintained 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 primary schools.

Key stage 1	Age 5–7	Year groups 1–2
Key stage 2	Age 7–11	Year groups 3–6

Key stages 1 and 2

NC core subjects:	NC non-core foundation subjects:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English;• mathematics;• science.	<table><tbody><tr><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• design and technology;• information and communication technology (ICT);</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• history• geography• art and design;</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• music;• physical education.</td></tr></tbody></table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• design and technology;• information and communication technology (ICT);	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• history• geography• art and design;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• music;• physical education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• design and technology;• information and communication technology (ICT);	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• history• geography• art and design;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• music;• physical education.		

1.2 WHAT ADDITIONAL STATUTORY AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM APPLY?

www.nc.uk.net/servlets/Subject?Subject=RE

Key stages 1 and 2: religious education

All schools must provide religious education (RE) for their 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 the country are mainly Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of other principal religions represented in the UK.

www.nc.uk.net/servlets/Subjects?Subject=MFL

Key stage 2: sex education

Primary schools must provide and keep up to date a written statement of their policy on sex education and make it available to parents and pupils. Parents can choose to withdraw their children from all or part of sex education.

1.3 WHAT ARE THE NON-STATUTORY AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM?

www.nc.uk.net/servlets/Subjects?Subject=PSHE

Key stages 1 and 2: personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Guidelines are provided in the *National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England*, pages 136–141.

www.nc.uk.net/servlets/Subjects?Subject=MFL

Key stage 2: modern foreign languages

Guidelines are provided in the *National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England*, pages 142–146.

1.4 HOW IS THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STRUCTURED?

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 children's performance. It is for schools to choose how they organise their school curriculum to include the PoS.

1.5 WHAT ARE THE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY (PoS)?

The PoS set out what children 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 programmes of study.

1.6 WHAT ARE THE GENERAL TEACHING REQUIREMENTS?

See the *National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England*, pages 30–40

www.nc.uk.net/gen_teach.html

There are four general teaching requirements:

- inclusion: providing effective learning opportunities for all children;
- use of language across the curriculum;
- use of ICT across the curriculum;
- health and safety.

1.7 WHAT CURRICULUM GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE?

The National Literacy Strategy *Framework for teaching from Reception to Year 6* and the *Framework for teaching mathematics from Reception to Year 6* (DfES) and the exemplar schemes of work (DfES/QCA) show how the PoS and ATs can be translated into practical, manageable teaching plans.

Chapter 1: Section 2: Attainment targets and level descriptions

This section is taken from pages 17–18 of the National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England: key stages 1 and 2

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

An attainment target (AT) sets out the ‘knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and levels of maturity are expected to have by the end of each key stage’¹. 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

ASSESSING ATTAINMENT AT THE END OF A KEY STAGE

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 the key stage are set out in detail in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority’s (QCA) 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 programmes of study (PoS), which teachers need to assess to build up a picture of a child’s performance over time in a range of contexts. Exemplification of the levels through pupils’ work can be found on the QCA website.

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

QCA/DfES have produced guidelines to support planning, development and implementation of the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented.

Teachers are required to report annually to parents on pupils’ progress. The level descriptions can be used as a basis for this.

www.nc.uk.net
www.qca.org.uk/cal/tests

www.ncaction.org.uk

PLANNING

www.nc.uk.net/notes_12.html#report
www.nc.uk.net/gt

REPORTING

TARGET SETTING

www.nc.uk.net/notes_12.html#target

www.dfes.gov.uk/a-z/TARGET_SETTING.html

The Government has established national targets for the proportion of 11-year-olds achieving level 4 in English and mathematics National Curriculum tests at the end of key stage 2. Schools are required to set targets for the proportion of their children reaching these targets. These are often translated within schools into targets for each age group as a means of promoting high standards and monitoring children's progress throughout their primary education. For all but very short teaching contracts, you should find out what the targets are for the children you teach and take account of these in planning your teaching.

Supporting the target setting process

Target Setting and Assessment in the National Literacy Strategy QCA/99/363

www.nc.uk.net/learn.html

Optional tests in English and mathematics are available to assist schools in monitoring pupils' progress towards these targets. Performance criteria have been developed by the DfES/QCA (1998) to support schools in the setting of targets.

For some aspects of the statutory assessment in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 1, level 2 has been subdivided into 2a, 2b and 2c so that it is possible to differentiate between the attainment of different groups of pupils who achieve level 2.

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 primary teachers in England: key stages 1 and 2* on pages 19–23 and in the subject sections.

PROMOTING KEY SKILLS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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/prog_study.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.

EXAMPLES IN THE LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

The examples in grey type are not statutory.

Chapter 1: Section 3:

A common structure and design for all subjects

The programmes of study

This section is taken from pages 26–27 of the *National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England: key stages 1 and 2*

www.nc.uk.net/home.html

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 (NC) 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.

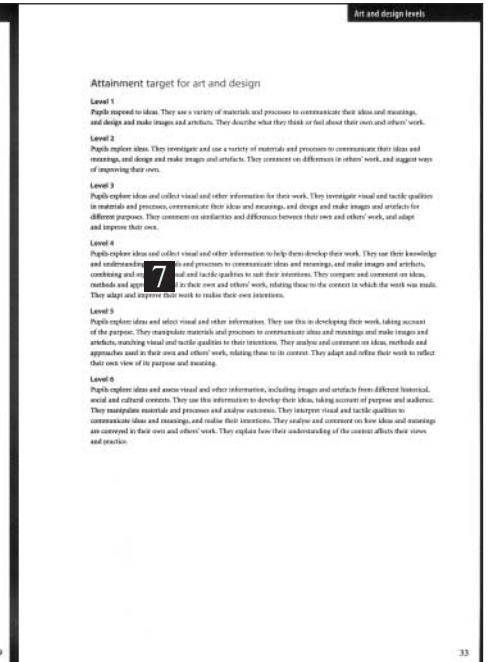
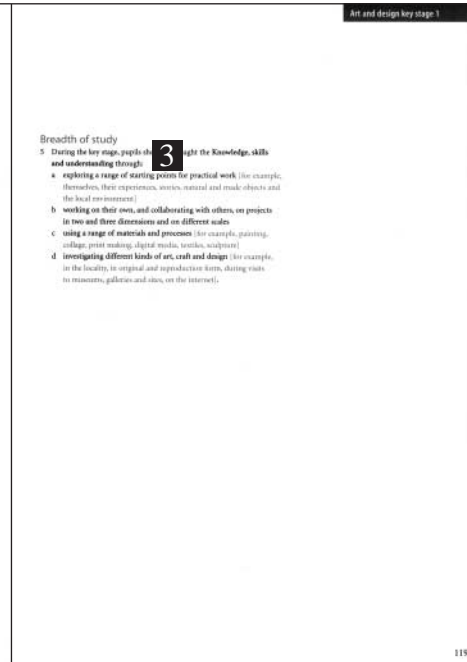
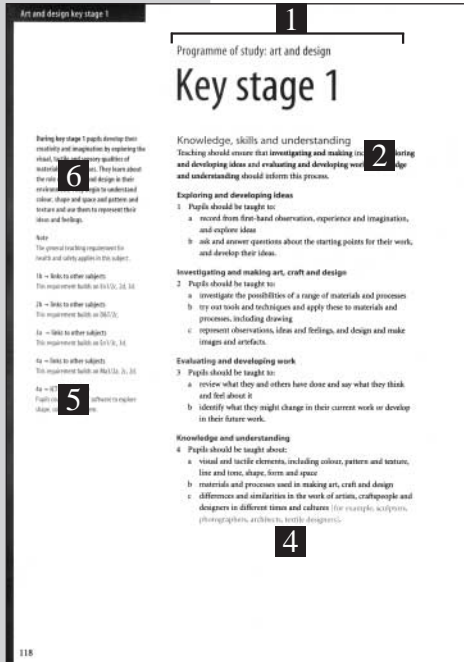
Schools are not required by law to teach content in grey type. This includes the examples in the main column **4** [printed inside square brackets], all text in the margins **5** and information and examples in the inclusion statement. In the programmes of study, *italic type* is used to emphasise options 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 (ATs) 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 programmes 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 children 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 children 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 in 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 ATs **7** are at the end of the *National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England: key stages 1 and 2*. They can be read alongside the programmes of study by folding out the handbook.