



Curriculum

Research review 2022-23



Contents

Introduction	4
The purpose of the curriculum	5
Social justice	5
Social mobility	5
Inclusion	6
Representation and diversity	6
The hidden or informal curriculum	6
Whole child development	7
Curriculum design	8
A Knowledge-rich curriculum	8
Phase-specific	8
Subject-specific	8
Proximal and ultimate functions	8
Core and hinterland	9
Sequencing and interleaving	9
Implementation	9
Curriculum and pedagogy	9
Knowledge organisers	9
Phonics and literacy	10
Ofsted	11
Judgement	11
Deep dives	11
School approaches	11
Cultural capital	12
Careers	13
Gatsby Benchmarks	13
Aspirations	13
Skills and outcomes	13
COVID-19 impact	14
Access to higher education	14
National curriculum	15

Early years 15

Primary..... 15

Secondary 16

References 17

Introduction

At a simple level, the curriculum encompasses the choices we make about what to teach and what we choose not to include. This marks a shift in thinking away from 'how' to teach and towards 'what' to teach and seeing the curriculum as a key driver of school improvement, as reflected in the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) (Ofsted, 2019b).

At a deeper level, the curriculum reflects the vision of a school for the knowledge, skills and values that it wants to promote. It is important that leaders consider the purpose of education – what should pupils be learning, and what for (Biesta, 2009)? If we view the curriculum as a learning

journey, then we need to consider both the narrative of the journey, but also the end point (Counsell, 2018a). More than that, we need to look at the transitions and sequencing of the curriculum across phases and key stages.

At Teach First we are committed to work for 'a fair education for all'. This must include access for all children to a broad and varied curriculum that encompasses diversity of content and representation. It must also bridge the academic and non-academic components of the curriculum, the social, emotional and physical development of students, as well as those things often called the 'hidden curriculum'.

The purpose of the curriculum

William identifies four main justifications given for mass public education: personal empowerment; cultural transmission; preparation for citizenship; and preparation for work. He suggests that part of the challenge of designing a curriculum is in reaching a compromise between these sometimes conflicting aims (William, 2013).

Counsell suggests the curriculum exists 'to change the pupil, to give the pupil new power'. She argues that an acid test should be whether it enables lower-attaining or disadvantaged pupils to access the discourse of educated people, so they gain 'the powers of the powerful' (Counsell, 2018b).

Others would argue that these very powers and structures need to be dismantled, to avoid reproduction of social inequality.

Social justice

Michael Young believes that in a democracy, all schools should be working towards access to powerful knowledge for all pupils. However, he contends that the conceptualisation of 'powerful knowledge' has come to mirror the existing academic curriculum of GCSEs and A-levels, and the EBacc, with the concomitant acceptance of its association with inequality. Instead, he argues that it should be concerned with social justice (Young, 2020).

The 'progressive vs conservative' debate and equating this with the use of education to preserve privilege, means that there is a tendency to see an emphasis on knowledge dismissed as 'rote learning' and not child-centred. Unfortunately, this can lead to many less advantaged children being denied access to the knowledge that the middle class take for granted. The elite never endorse a 'child-centred' approach for their children (Young, 2018).

This is perhaps the position that Michaela School is responding to, with its strong focus on traditional academic learning, including drills. They conceptualise the explicit direction of

character and curriculum as about enabling their pupils to 'become free' (Birbalsingh, 2020). As Young puts it, the difference lies in having 'power over' something rather than 'power to'. In practice this leads to tension regarding the balance between the instructional role of the teacher versus the responsibility of the learner (Young, 2020).

Choices taken as part of curriculum planning will reflect the tension between these poles. They are reflected in the value judgements embodied by what is left in and what is omitted from our curriculum. They are also seen in the choices of subjects or qualifications on offer to different groups of pupils based upon prior attainment or perceptions of ability.

Social mobility

Michael Young talks of the importance of school forming a separation between pupils and their everyday experience, as a condition for them to acquire knowledge beyond that experience (Young, 2018). Michaela School defends its curriculum of 'dead white men', for the access it believes it gives pupils to social mobility (Birbalsingh, 2020).

Recent research suggests that education may not be the great social leveller than some have claimed. Parental resources remain key to upward mobility: you are 60% more likely to be in a professional job if you were from a privileged rather than a working class background (Social Mobility Commission, 2021).

A study of geographical inequality shows that education alone cannot solve the complex issues of inequality and deprivation. Where you live can have a huge impact on your outcomes and earnings despite similarities in background and level of education (Ayoub and Samar, 2020).

A Policy Exchange essay goes further in questioning current social mobility approaches, arguing that they need to be about the many, rather than just ladders into the elite for the few (Francis, 2021).

Inclusion

An inclusive curriculum has a positive effect on the experiences and outcomes of all students. It has been argued, e.g. by Ainscow (1999) that a broad understanding of inclusion means overcoming barriers to participation as they might be experienced by any pupil (Ainscow, 1999 in Hockings, 2010).

UCL, as part of its own work on reducing the attainment gap between different ethnic groups, has produced a report with tips to support staff in delivering a more inclusive curriculum:

1. Use a diverse range of resources and contextualise your content.
2. Increase your own pedagogical knowledge.
3. Reflect on your own biases and assumptions about students.
4. Conduct a prior knowledge assessment.
5. Expose students to potential BAME role models.
6. Model inclusive behaviour, language and attitudes.
7. Learn and pronounce students' names correctly.
8. Use micro-affirmations (UCL, 2020).

Representation and diversity

Protests in 2020 focused on Black Lives Matter raised the important question of diversity and representation within the curriculum. Young recognises the alienation of some pupils through the boundaries between their everyday knowledge and the subject-based knowledge of the curriculum, but as something to overcome rather than avoid (Young, 2020).

Teach First highlighted the absence of diverse literature choices at GCSE in *Missing Pages* (Teach First, 2020). A further report by Penguin books, *Lit in Colour*, has also highlighted a lack of representation in the English curriculum (Elliott *et al.*, 2021).

Diversity in the history curriculum has a long history of research and focus. Most departments are focused on how to embed diversity throughout the curriculum rather than see it as an 'add-on'. There is also significant work around pedagogical approaches to sensitive topics.

The [Holocaust Education Trust](#) is a leading organisation in providing training and resources for teaching about the Holocaust. [The Black Curriculum](#) focuses on the teaching of Black British history. [Meanwhile Elsewhere](#) is an endeavour to widen historical horizons beyond the taught curriculum. Ben Newmark has also recently authored the [learning disability history](#) curriculum.

Across other subjects, it is important that diverse voices and people are seen and heard, through both resources and events.

The hidden or informal curriculum

Pupils in school don't just learn what is chosen to be included in the academic curriculum – the subjects they study. They learn from their peers and the adults around them, the behaviour and attitude and values modelled and the language used. It is important therefore to consider the more informal messages that are given in school around diversity and inclusion. This may be linked to PSHE or relationships education but is equally about how leaders deal with incidents such as racism or homophobia.

Messages about the value placed on different abilities – academic, sporting or otherwise – are often also implicit in decisions about how pupils are guided in making subject choices at KS4. Specific pathways based on prior attainment may limit options and send an unintended message of exclusion to some individuals and groups of pupils, particularly any that are traditionally disadvantaged. What are the messages received by girls and boys or non-binary or trans students? What are the messages heard by different ethnicities or religions?

The curriculum may also, in the words of Lisa Delpit, communicate a 'culture of power' – whereby the dominant group has tacit knowledge of 'culture' that is often taken for granted. Delpit advocates that educators, therefore, should assist pupils' learning of the 'culture of power', but should not be

*forced to attend to hollow,
decontextualised subskills, but rather
within the context of meaningful
communicative endeavours; that they
must be allowed the resource of the
teacher's expert knowledge, while being
helped to acknowledge their own
'expertness' as well. (Delpit, 1988)*

child. This is not just the academic outcomes, but how social and emotional and physical development is supported. As above, this may be through explicit provision in the timetable, as part of PE or PSHCE lessons, but also through the provision of extra-curricular activities and support, and through the messages shared and modelled by all.

Whole child development

The curriculum of the school should reflect a commitment to the development of the whole

Curriculum design

In seeking to answer the question, ‘What are schools for?’, Michael Young was dissatisfied with the functionalist answers offered by the sociology of education. Marxist views of the curriculum as an instrument for the reproduction of social inequality and functionalist views of it providing modern economies with the skills and knowledge they are thought to need, remain current today (Young, 2018). However, Young warns against being seduced by knowledge alone, and the dominance of political priorities. In this, he echoes Biesta’s call to consider not just ‘what’ we teach, but ‘what for’ (Biesta, 2009).

Christine Counsell refers to the importance of seeing the curriculum as a narrative that is structured over time.

Don't think of the perfect curriculum as the goal – think, rather, of a permanent steady state of middle leaders deeply engaged with curricular questions, in a state of continuing renewal and ownership of curriculum, using that very renewal process as ongoing teacher development

(Christine Counsell in Ashbee, 2021, p.7).

A Knowledge-rich curriculum

Young’s vision of ‘knowledge for all’ should be seen as a vision for the future of schools, not associated with immediate outcomes. He sees a knowledge-rich curriculum as a theoretical position, one that defines what it means to be a teacher and what we perceive as the purpose of schools (Young, 2018).

Knowledge-led approaches have been widely adopted in policies such as the EBacc, which is one of the mechanisms used to rank schools.

Phase-specific

Curriculums are developed according to specific phases of learning: early years and KS1–5. At KS4 and KS5 these may be clearly delineated by exam specifications, but at other phases they are guided (to a greater or lesser extent) by the national curriculum. A new guide for the early years foundation stage has recently been released (DfE, 2021b).

Subject-specific

Research into ‘far transfer’ shows little evidence to support the idea that learning knowledge, skills or attitude in one situation can be applied to another, different one. i.e. if you learn A, you will be better able to learn B. As a result, it is important to consider the intrinsic value of studying a subject, rather than view it as subordinate and only as a means to an end (De Bruyckere, Kirschner and Hulshof, 2020).

Subject boundaries and specialisation of knowledge are therefore crucial for pupils to make progress and acquire new knowledge (Young, 2018).

Young’s conceptualisation of a knowledge-based curriculum is also a high-resource one. Teachers need more than just content knowledge of their subject, but to be participants in members of a specialist community that defines the concepts and methods of their subject. In practical terms, this high-resource curriculum conception means that school rankings continue to express the inequalities of per-pupil funding models rather than being evidence of pupils’ ability (Young, 2020).

Proximal and ultimate functions

The proximal function of the curriculum is the content that makes the next step possible. Each

of these individual parts contributes to the ultimate function, which may not be seen until later (Counsell, 2018a). Understanding the ultimate function is the job of the teacher and should inform the proximal reasoning about content inclusion at any given point. i.e. including information to prevent future misconceptions.

Core and hinterland

The core is the residue, the crucial knowledge that often needs committing to memory. But teaching the core knowledge alone is to lose the bigger picture and potentially make learning harder. The hinterland is the additional knowledge that helps us to understand and remember the core. Importantly, we need to distinguish between 'clutter', or extraneous engagement activities that distract, and the true hinterland that makes curriculum work as narrative and focuses thinking and remembering on the right things (Counsell, 2018a).

Sequencing and interleaving

Christine Counsell reminds us that the curriculum is a journey, or a narrative, where content is structured over time (Counsell, 2018a).

Developments in the science of learning help us to understand the best ways to deliver the curriculum in order to secure the most learning. One such area is around the role of retrieval and spacing of learning. This research has implications for how we plan and deliver the curriculum.

Delayed review of at least several months seems more likely to support retention of knowledge for several years (Cepeda *et al.*, 2008). This research lends weight to concepts such as spiral curriculum design, where revisiting topics is built in at specified intervals. More specifically, interweaving concepts and topics can prevent the isolation of pieces of information that are harder to recall. Weaving together the threads of information can help to reveal the bigger picture, especially for novices, building schemata (Counsell, 2018a).

Implementation

However well designed, a curriculum will only have the desired impact if it is implemented effectively. A carefully considered approach to assessment will be part of this implementation. Implementation is also about understanding teaching and learning across departments and phases, and transition between them. It will also be an important component of professional development and building strong subject/phase teams.

Curriculum and pedagogy

A focus on knowledge alone can fail to encourage a relationship with knowledge that leads to new questions. Memorisation is a step to acquiring new knowledge, rather than an end in itself (Young, 2020). This requires the development of a curriculum-led pedagogy. Subject-specific pedagogies will be explored in future reviews.

Knowledge organisers

Knowledge organisers are the subject of disagreement between those teachers that find them useful as a means of both standardising content and supporting retrieval practice, and those that see them as restrictive and limiting.

Joe Kirby argues that they are a means of summarising the important, useful and powerful knowledge on a topic in an easy to access format. Mark Miller explores the purpose, content and pedagogy of them. Whilst being of benefit for students, they can also help to develop teachers' subject knowledge. The finite space forces us to make careful decisions about what is included and what is not. The organiser can be used as a tool for retrieval practice but it should also be elaborated on to develop learning. Knowledge organisers are not a silver bullet but can support a knowledge-based curriculum when used in a considered manner (Miller, 2018).

Phonics and literacy

In 2011, a government survey found that nearly 15% of adults in the UK had literacy levels below Entry level 3, equivalent to a 9–11-year-old (National Literacy Trust, no date). Growing up in a word-poor context can have long reaching negative consequences for children. The new GCSE and A-level exams also have an increased reading comprehension demand, making the teaching of reading ever more important (Quigley, 2018).

There is increasing evidence illustrating the importance of reading for pleasure, for both education and personal development (DfE, 2012). The OECD reports reading for pleasure as more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status (OECD, 2002). However, the research also suggests that a growing number of children, disproportionately those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, do not read for pleasure (DfE, 2012).

Strategies reported to improve reading for pleasure include:

- having access to resources and having books of their own
- choice and interest
- literacy-targeted rewards e.g. books or vouchers
- parents and the home environment fostering a love of reading
- relationships between teachers and children and children and families
- use of libraries (DfE, 2012)

The EEF recommends a balanced approach to develop children's early reading. Promising approaches include storytelling, activities to develop letter and sound knowledge, and singing and rhyming activities, prior to the introduction of synthetic phonics (EEF, 2018). In KS1 it recommends a balanced approach that integrates both decoding and comprehension skills, and the effective implementation of a systematic phonics programme (EEF, 2020).

Significant research evidence supports the use of synthetic phonics in the early teaching of reading to beginners (Ofsted, 2019a). The EIF refers to matching reading materials to learners' phonics knowledge (Ofsted, 2019b).

At KS2, the EEF recommendations continue a theme of improving language capability, and teaching reading comprehension through modelling and supported practice (EEF, 2017).

In secondary schools, the EEF recognises that literacy is the responsibility of all teachers. However, rather than promoting whole-school literacy approaches, they recommend a focus on 'disciplinary literacy', building on the premise that each subject has its own unique language and vocabulary. They suggest that general approaches such as DEAR (drop everything and read) will be less effective. Evaluations of silent reading approaches show inconsistent effects on student outcomes and motivation (EEF, 2019).

Ofsted

The question, 'What do we understand to be the real substance of education?' was raised by Amanda Spielman following research that showed a dearth of understanding about the curriculum in some schools (Spielman, 2018). Ofsted's concerns have focused on: narrowing the curriculum in order to over-emphasise academic achievement; a fear that disadvantaged students are discouraged from taking academic subjects; and limited thinking and training about the curriculum which is often equated with the timetable or exam specifications (Ofsted, 2019a).

Judgement

The EIF 2019 judges the quality of education by evaluating intent, implementation and impact of the curriculum.

Intent

- Ambitious for *all* learners
- Knowledge and cultural capital
- Coherent and sequenced
- Same academic, technical or vocational ambitions
- Learners study the full curriculum, 'specialising' only when necessary

Implementation

- Teachers have good subject and course knowledge
- Leaders support non-specialists
- Present subject matter clearly, check understanding, identify misconceptions, provide feedback, adapt teaching responsively
- Designed to develop long-term memory
- Effective use of assessment
- Environment allowing a focus on learning

Impact

- Learners develop detailed knowledge and skills
- Achieve well, reflected in national tests/exams

- Learners ready for next stage of education or employment or training

Ofsted has been clear that schools do not need to write statements that outline their intent, this is simply the planned curriculum that indicates what they want students to know and be able to do at different points through their school career

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSEZga-CAPI>.

Deep dives

Ofsted's approach to looking at curriculum and the '3Is' of intent, implementation and impact, is through a deep dive into a selected number of subject areas. According to Ofsted, the purpose of the deep dive is to gather evidence on the intent, implementation and impact over a sample of subjects or topics. This is in collaboration with teachers and leaders, and seeks 'to interrogate and establish a coherent evidence base on quality of education' (Ofsted, 2019c, p. 4).

School approaches

Ofsted research identified three different successful school approaches to the curriculum in a small sample of schools selected as being particularly invested in curriculum design and judged as good or outstanding:

- Knowledge-rich –skills are an outcome and the emphasis is on valuable knowledge.
- Knowledge-engaged – knowledge underpins the intertwined teaching of skills.
- Skills-led (smaller number) – the focus is on skills such as resilience and mindset (Ofsted, 2019a).

Particular concerns have been raised around the narrowing of curriculum at KS2, with a weakness in foundation subjects, and KS3 where it is reduced to two years to enable a 3-year KS4.

Cultural capital

Cultural capital is seen as the currency that helps you be successful in life. It is a heavily contested idea, closely interwoven with issues relating to social mobility and disadvantage, as well as social class. It has become increasingly associated with a knowledge-rich curriculum, particularly as a means of narrowing the achievement gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.

According to the new EIF, inspectors will make a judgement on the quality of education by evaluating the extent to which:

- leaders take on or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life (Ofsted, 2019b).

Cultural capital has become increasingly controversial with protests and campaigns about the content of the curriculum, in particular the call capital to succeed in school than males (Dumais, 2002). She also notes the significance of the early

to 'decolonise' the curriculum. Introducing greater diversity, for example through studying a greater range of literature from BAME authors or including particular topics of study in history that relate to Black history or women's role is generally welcomed, though with concerns raised over the political messaging that accompanies this diversification (DfE, 2022). Teaching the concept of critical race theory in schools has come in for particular criticism¹.

A US study on the effects of cultural capital on academic achievement suggests that the effect is smaller than previously reported and that it varies in high and low socio-economic status environments. The results mostly support cultural reproduction theory based in part on the fact that most children who possess high levels of cultural capital also tend to possess other socio-economic resources that have positive effects on academic outcomes (Jæger, 2011; Xu and Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Dumais explores this further by focusing on the 'habitus', suggesting that female students may be more encouraged to make use of their cultural

years and how this influences teacher perceptions (Dumais, 2006).

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/23/uk-critical-race-theory-trump-conservatives-structural-inequality>
(Accessed 05/08/2022)

Careers

Statutory guidance from the DfE for maintained schools and academies in England details the requirement to provide opportunities for a range of education and training providers to access all year 8 to 13 pupils to inform them about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships (DfE, 2021a). The National Governance Association (NGA) has provided further guidance on the role of governing boards in overseeing effective careers programmes (NGA, 2021).

The Ofsted *School Inspection Handbook* also highlights the importance of meeting these requirements as a key element in the judgement on personal development (Ofsted, 2019d).

Gatsby Benchmarks

1. a stable careers programme
2. learning from career and labour market information
3. addressing the needs of each pupil
4. linking curriculum learning to careers
5. encounters with employers and employees
6. experiences of workplaces
7. encounters with further and higher education
8. personal guidance

(Gatsby, 2018)

Benchmark 4 in particular covers weaving strands about careers through the curriculum and all subjects taught, rather than leaving it as a separate element. This helps pupils to understand how what they are learning relates to their future opportunities and possible careers (The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2021).

Aspirations

Raising aspirations has long been seen as the key to improving outcomes for students, but a report from 2020 highlights a disconnect between career aspirations and jobs among young people in the UK. In other words, there is a gap between aspiration and opportunity. E.g. five times as

many young people want to work in art, culture, entertainment and sport as there are jobs available. There is a high level of consistency in career choices throughout students' teenage years, suggesting that the result is likely to be frustration. Those students who benefit from careers education and activities in secondary school generally have aspirations that are – in aggregate – better connected to the labour market (Chambers, Percy and Rogers, 2020).

The British Academy has sought to quantify the demand for skills related to the arts, humanities and social sciences. They conclude that graduates in these disciplines are highly employable across a range of sectors and roles requiring the skills employers value – communication, collaboration, research and analysis, independence, creativity and adaptability (The British Academy, 2020).

Skills and outcomes

Structural changes in the labour market, including those affecting technological and work norms, have led to emphasis on the importance of building essential skills. However, there is limited research into the links between skills development and education, employment and social outcomes. Findings suggest that essential skills interventions tend to be more effective when they are regular, long term, explicit, embedded, structured, supported and targeted (Angus *et al.*, 2020).

The Sutton Trust reports that essential life skills such as confidence, motivation, resilience and communication are associated with better academic outcomes and better prospects in the workplace, and links this to the tradition of 'character' building in private school education. Extra-curricular activities can contribute to the development of these skills but provision in the state sector is patchy and participation low (Cullinane and Montacute, 2017).

The Social Mobility Commission also highlights the importance of extra-curricular activities in providing valuable life experiences and developing 'soft' skills. Its report, *An Unequal Playing Field*, echoes earlier findings about the unequal distribution of opportunities to participate

in extra-curricular activities, with household income being the most important factor. They identify different groups which are more or less likely to participate in particular activities, for example girls being more likely to participate in music, dance and art and boys in sport. There is also ethnic variation, with for example British Pakistani youth being far less likely to take music classes compared to British Indian and White British youth (Donnelly *et al.*, 2019).

Surveys of employers have consistently indicated the importance that they put on wider character, behaviour and attributes when recruiting young people. A high priority is placed on applicants being 'work ready', with 40% reporting dissatisfaction with wider character, behaviours and attributes. One third are dissatisfied by the amount of relevant work experience young people have (CBI and Pearson, 2019).

COVID-19 impact

The Gatsby Foundation commissioned research looking at the impact of COVID-19 on careers guidance. It highlighted the translation of guidance to virtual or remote formats, but found that a fifth of respondents had put activities on hold, and just under half had reduced the amount of time spent on careers guidance activities. There were positive indications about increased involvement of parents and guardians, but concern regarding access to employers to support experience of work. The most deprived areas were slightly more likely to regard the importance of careers guidance as increasing following the pandemic (Gatsby Foundation, 2020).

Access to higher education

Despite increasing numbers of students entering higher education, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are still less likely to progress to HE and to enrol in more selective universities. Despite investment in widening access interventions, progress has been modest. There is a lack of evidence on the impact of outreach interventions on enrolment, with much focus being on increased aspirations and awareness. Providing financial aid

to disadvantaged students has a small but positive effect on enrolment, but is a high-cost strategy. Interventions providing mentoring, counselling and role models also have a positive association with outcomes, as do summer schools, but there is limited evidence in relation to specific enrolment translation (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020).

National curriculum

Early years

Recent revisions to the early learning goals (ELG), which are statutory, and *Development Matters*, non-statutory guidance, have generated significant debate in the early years community. This is partly centred around specific elements of the content framework, and partly around the approaches to learning and how applicable elements of cognitive science are to the early years. The early years foundation stage sets the standards for learning and development from birth to 5 years old and must be followed by all schools and Ofsted-registered early years providers (including childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes) (DfE, 2017; 2020).

Curriculum in EY is centred around seven key areas of learning.

The three **prime** areas:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

and four **specific** areas:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

Children are taught mostly through games and play.

There are four guiding principles:

1. every child is unique, constantly learning and can be resilient
2. the importance of positive relationships
3. good development and learning happen in enabling environments with teaching and support from responsive adults
4. children develop and learn at different rates

(DfE, 2017; 2020)

Assessment in early years is by the early learning goals as a set of 'expected' standards of attainment by the end of the EYFS. Practitioners assess progress formatively, through observation

and interaction with children. The EYFS profile is completed at the end of the reception year, in the final term, as an assessment against the ELG – as emerging, expected or exceeding. Reasonable adjustments should be made for children with SEND, but it should be noted that there will also be a wide disparity in ages at this assessment point (DfE, 2017; 2020).

NB new guidance was released in March 2021 outlining the mandatory framework from September 2021 (DfE, 2021b).

Concerns have been raised recently regarding the apparent expectation for schools to map their reception year curriculum to the national curriculum requirements of KS1. While Ofsted has directly refuted the need for such progression maps, there is undoubtedly inconsistency in some inspections.

Primary

Every state-funded school must offer a balanced and broadly based curriculum that:

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

All state schools must make provision for a daily act of collective worship and teach religious education to pupils at every key stage, as well as make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Maintained schools are legally required to follow the statutory national curriculum (DfE, 2013).

Core subjects are:

- english, mathematics and science

Foundation subjects are:

- art and design, computing, design and technology, languages (at KS2), geography, history, music, physical education (there must also be provision for teaching PSHE and RE)

Standardised assessments in primary:

- reception baseline test –introduced in Autumn 2021 (Standards and Testing Agency, 2020)

- Year 1 phonics screening test – repeated in Year 2 if they do not meet the expected standard.
- KS1 SATs in reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling (optional), maths – non-statutory from 2023
- KS2 SATs in reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling; maths

Secondary

KS3 compulsory subjects:

- English
- maths
- science
- history
- geography
- modern foreign languages
- design and technology
- art and design
- music
- physical education
- citizenship
- computing

Religious education and sex and relationships education are also compulsory subjects from KS3.

KS4 compulsory core subjects:

- English
- maths
- science

Compulsory ‘foundation’ subjects:

- computing
- physical education
- citizenship

And at least one other subject:

- arts
- design and technology
- humanities
- modern foreign languages

In practice, school curriculums at KS4 are increasingly designed around the eBaccalaureate where schools direct students to take GCSEs in the core subject areas:

- English language and literature
- maths
- the sciences
- history or geography a language

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