

# Curriculum

## A summary of what's changing



### What are the key changes for Maths?

- **The new national curriculum is now statutory** for all maintained schools, except in Years 2 & 6. Children who started Year 2 and Year 6 in September 2014 will be assessed on the old National Curriculum.
- **It goes further than the previous curriculum.** There's quite a lot of new content which, up until now, has been regarded as the province of 'secondary Maths'. This includes long division at year 6, and an increasingly complex understanding of fractions and decimals. Some content has moved 'down' by one or two years, meaning children will be expected to master some things earlier than they have before.
- **Practice is key!** The aims state that it is imperative to keep key maths fundamentals, such as times tables and number facts, 'on the boil' through varied and repeated practice in order that children can solve progressively complex problems.
- **There is a renewed emphasis on calculating and problem solving** with fractions and decimals and less on data handling (now called statistics).
- **The programme of study is set out on a year-by-year basis** however schools have some flexibility in when they teach content within each key stage. It is worth noting that although flexibility is allowed, schools are required to set out their school curriculum for mathematics on a year-by-year basis and put this online.
- **As you've probably heard, calculators are now banned in the KS2 SAT.** The new programme of study backs up its stance on calculators by emphasising further the importance of mental fluency and the use of efficient written methods in the four mathematical operations.
- **Levels are going:** National curriculum levels are to be replaced by a precise scales score where 100 will represent the new standard. Schools will be expected to report to parents on children's progress (they can decide as a school how to do this). While we still await the new 'performance descriptors' to inform teacher assessments at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 (coming later in Autumn 2014), it remains unclear for now as to how they will tie in with ongoing assessment tracking
- **Reception Baseline Assessment:** There is to be a new baseline assessment in Foundation Stage from 2016 (pilot in 2015). As yet it is not clear what form this will take - but the government state that they want teachers to be able to choose from 'a range of assessment approaches' that are likely to be administered by the reception teaching staff. It will be used to enable schools to report on progress as well as attainment.

## What are the key changes for English?

- **Phonics fast and first.** The key shift in government policy on reading has in many ways already happened, since the government published the **'Importance of Teaching' White Paper** back in Autumn 2010, insisting that all children should be taught to read using this method above all others. The phonics funding initiative followed, as did the Phonics reading test for 6 year olds, and the requirement for schools to publish their results through the RAISE database. With the new curriculum, synthetic phonics officially passes into the programmes of study at every year.
- **Focus on the fundamentals.** There's a much deeper focus on learning grammar explicitly. Where the old curriculum requires that pupils be taught 'some of the grammatical features of written standard English', and learn to 'consider' language structure when composing their own texts, the new curriculum contains a long list of often complex grammatical concepts, punctuation and spelling rules that children will have to identify and label as well as use.
- **Reading for pleasure.** While there is a perception that the new curriculum is a little dry and technical, this view overlooks the new curriculum's clearly stated intention that children should read widely and voraciously for pleasure and for meaning. The curriculum stipulates that children should experience a range of literature, non-fiction and non-literary texts. The new curriculum highlights the pivotal role of schools in ensuring that reading takes place beyond the school gates, stating 'they should provide library facilities and set ambitious expectations for reading at home.'
- **Recitation and debate.** Where the old curriculum uses drama as an important vehicle for children to explore and convey a range of situations, characters and emotions, the new curriculum relegates drama to 'role-play' as part of a wider assortment of oral performance that includes presentation, improvisation and debate. There is more emphasis on structure and convention: the new curriculum seems to go in stronger on children being able to organise their thoughts and ideas for the purposes of debate, discussion, explanation and narration. There is also more around social awareness: the new curriculum pulls out 'gaining, maintaining and monitoring the interest of the listener(s)' as a separate objective.
- **Levels are going.** The government has announced that National curriculum levels will be abolished and will not be replaced. Schools will be expected to report to parents on children's progress (they can decide as a school how to do this).
- **Reception Baseline Assessment.** There is to be a new baseline assessment in Foundation Stage from 2015. As yet it is not clear what form this will take, but the government line is that they want teachers to be able to choose from 'a range of assessment approaches' that are likely to be administered by the reception teaching staff. It will be used to enable schools to report on progress as well as attainment.

## • What are the key changes for Science?

- **Greater range of investigative activities.** Working scientifically (the new name for scientific enquiry) looks fairly familiar but now has a lot more work on different types of scientific enquiry such as looking for naturally occurring patterns and relationships, observing something change over time and classifying, as well as the good old fair test. This should help to broaden the range of investigative activities that you can do with your children and there are suggestions for some things you could do in the accompanying Notes and Guidance.
- **More on identifying and naming living things especially in KS1.** There is a danger that this could all be done as extremely boring naming exercises but teachers could also use it as a chance to get your children outside doing things which connect them with the natural world like playing plant tag (first one to touch a daisy leaf/birch tree trunk etc.) or having scavenger hunts. They can continue to find out about local animals such as mini-beasts/birds/mammals but also look for information about weird and wonderful living things in other environments (sea/polar regions/rainforests).
- **Seasonal changes including day length in Y1.** This just means making something out of the daily weather board but teachers will need to plan to do this through the year rather than as a half-termly topic.
- **Basic digestive system for lower KS2.** This is a great one for finding out their ideas about what happens to their food in their body, researching the answers and then looking back to find out what they have learnt.
- **Evolution and inheritance in upper KS2.** An important scientific idea to introduce to Y6 but remember that the evidence will come from secondary sources rather than hands-on investigations. Start looking out for fossils.
- **The programme of study is set out on a year-by-year basis** but schools can decide for themselves when to teach the content in each key stage. One thing worth noting is that there are five topics per year group so if schools do one per half term they will have a half term spare for being creative, carrying out extended investigations, going into more depth, making cross-curricular links, making a science trail, writing a science newspaper or just generally enjoying science.

