

Questions 1a to 1e refer to Aspect 1: Curriculum Design and Content

1 a) In relation to the curriculum what is it reasonable to expect schools to provide and manage within the statutory time requirements of the primary school day?

It is reasonable to expect schools to provide and manage :

- A wide and comprehensive coverage of the knowledge, skills, understanding and emotional literacy that can allow ECM to be addressed and developed with the additional important premise of learning to live in a sustainable way.
- A balanced curriculum, of the areas of learning and development with increasing definition of specific subjects in Lower and then Upper KS2
- A curriculum that is broad and balanced and which does not place political emphasis on particular areas of learning at the expense of this key aim. A curriculum which legitimises children's personal knowledge and skills and builds on it with a real sense of pupil empowerment. A curriculum which enables children to develop confidence in a sense of who they are and how they fit into the world and relate to others. A curriculum which endorses purposeful learning and which enable pupils to both 'root' with their own locality and community and to recognise how they are part of and connected to the wider world.
- A curriculum which ensures all learning and thinking styles are developed in the young child ; there should be no diminution of subjects taught .Each subject has specific contributions to make to enable different children maintain different abilities in understanding – and thus contributions to society. Children need to be given a broad base from the earliest stages (including babyhood) in order to become fully developed adults in a complex world whose diversity they have to understand.

Notes

1. The clear and careful explanations about using the current National Curriculum that were given in 'Excellence and Enjoyment' (DfES 2003) have enabled some schools to meet the statutory requirements whilst innovating their curriculum in such a way that it is not only broad and balanced but fits within the constraints of daily time allocation.
2. A political emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy areas of the curriculum has devalued the contribution of the current foundation subjects as head teachers feel compelled to focus on measurable outcomes such as target setting and SATs. This has in many cases constrained the potential of the current National Curriculum to inspire and motivate pupils.
3. a current trend focuses on 'creativity' through an integrated approach (i.e. working in an interdisciplinary way that makes meaningful and productive links between a few subject areas). This kind of thinking and working requires teachers to have confidence and knowledge about the curriculum so that they can 're-make' it and personalise it to suit their school and pupil contexts. However, due in part to a deficit in foundation subject knowledge and an over reliance on given schemes of work, teachers find this scenario extremely challenging.
4. When pupils are taken out of class to take part in 'catch up' literacy and numeracy initiatives they are often deprived of participating in curricular areas which they really enjoy and / or do well in. One risk of this excessive focusing on additional literacy initiatives with

young children is an erosion of enthusiasm and enjoyment in the wider curriculum (evident from the study by Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Pirls), which included results from 45 countries and provinces 2007).

5. children have different intelligences and learning styles so it is of key importance that they are motivated and enthralled by providing access to a broad and balanced curriculum that both recognises and builds on the range of diverse, personal experiences that pupils bring to school. Literacy and numeracy are crucial areas of any curriculum but they need a relevant and meaningful context to engage pupils fully and thus invoke a motivational need for mastery.
6. Agendas such as ECM, the UN Rights of the Child, Global Citizenship and Education for Sustainable Development all provide inspiring and desirable frameworks for a relevant primary curriculum. We have the challenge of educating a very diverse population in the context of a rapidly changing and diverse world. Understanding and relating to diversity is an important consideration which young children can start to engage with through actively finding out about others, their context and everyday lives and developing skills of empathy and enquiry. There is considerable relevance and cross over here with relationship skills See Good Childhood enquiry (2006).

1 b) Should primary pupils continue to be introduced to all the subjects of the National Curriculum from Year 1?

Comments:

- The implicit skills and values and attitudes of all subject areas should continue to be introduced but the sudden introduction of the rigidity of discrete subjects at this stage is too big a jump from the far more holistic and thematic nature of the Foundation Stage (FS) . 5yrs is too young for such demarcation.
- , in a balance of the areas of learning and development at KS1, more emphasis should be put on 'humanities' – past, present, future of the real/ 'concrete' world – and much less on science in KS1.
- an integrated approach rather than formalised discrete learning is best. This may be achieved through extending the FS curriculum but it is important not to lose the uniqueness of individual subject contributions. Teachers should have the discretion and the expertise to draw on relevant subject knowledge and adapt a given curriculum framework to fit pupils' needs and school contexts.
- There is growing evidence that schools who maintain the holistic approach of the Foundation Stage can continue an enquiring , flexible approach in Reception and KS1. Gradually as questioning becomes more polarised into subject areas with increasing knowledge and understanding subjects can be grouped into humanities and sciences with increasing definition in Lower KS2 and complexity in Upper KS2. In the real world one does not separate one's understanding into subject areas – rather uses a combination of understandings to appreciate the intertwined themes of the world about us.
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1 c) What should be the position of science and ICT within the primary curriculum?

Comments:

- Science, as with geography (note the interdisciplinary reference), contributes essentially to young children's growing understanding of the natural-physical environment, through appreciation of site and location in the school grounds in relation to such studies as micro-climates, plant distribution, conservation and enhancement of features such as ponds – and the development of similar ideas in exploring the environment further afield, such as in stream and river studies, farming and agriculture, landscape and leisure. Through these environments an increased understanding of the subjects develops with increasing age. (See above and below)
- These are vital curriculum areas. ICT however must be seen as a vehicle and medium for enhancing learning rather than as a discrete subject and although skills must be learnt and acquired it is not a bolt-on or stand alone subject.
- There should be reduced emphasis on science until extensive experience has been gained, through fieldwork and teaching and learning, of the real world and its variety of built and natural environments, to help children contextualise.
- Experience suggests that, now so many children have access to computers and digital cameras at home, there is often a great mismatch between school and out-of school experience, with school lagging behind
- Both ICT and Science should be integrated i.e. the skills of each – observation, recording and synthesis be used in considerable outdoor work – begun in the earliest years and continued through KS1. After this the use of personalised learning systems should support research e.g. portable, mobile technologies which can be held in the hand and which can therefore be used ubiquitously, that is in any location or context (eg mobile phones, PDAs, games consoles, MP3 players). This in turn supports "the drive to tailor education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person's potential." In other words, it is about making education more learner-centred. By KS2 questions will be forming which goes beyond description and involves experimentation and requires subject based research – because that is how the plethora of information is organised in the most accessible resources on the web and in the library. This development expects that the child is already competent in literacy and numeracy by seven years
- On a practical level technology and the media are indispensable for making sense of the plethora of information coming forward in electronic form, for developing creativity and associated with critical thinking and for enabling communication without borders through video conferencing and other school linking. Meanwhile understanding of the outdoor classroom is enhanced through PDA and video communication.....
- Implicit in the above point is fieldwork. Out-of-classroom learning has to involve enquiries in the environment of which some will inevitably be geographic as well as scientific. Investigations in the school grounds, in the local area and further afield on specific fieldtrips can develop other skills, such as visual appreciation (connections with art), mapping capability, the use of electronic technologies, sketching, and data gathering techniques including annotating maps and sketches, interviews, photography and gathering specimens, e.g. soil samples. Fieldwork also enhances geographical and scientific understanding through the development of enquiries (from question to conclusion/suggestions), recognition of the development of places (links with history), exploration of the use of features, services and facilities in places (whether shopping or tourism), an understanding of issues in the environment (e.g. litter, accessibility, traffic, play facilities, hard surfacing and so on).

1 d) Should some of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas of learning and development, and pedagogy, be extended into the primary curriculum?

Comments:

- Yes – it is a holistic, realistic and accessible way of facilitating children’s learning and as long as the skills of discrete subjects are being taught, this would seem like the most appropriate form of learning for young children
- Why only ‘some’? Yes; it is more appropriate at KS1 than the present highly subdivide subject curriculum. EYFS provides some unification of ideas and experiences and could, used wisely, give the curriculum more coherence and remove some of the (perceived or real) pressure. There could be some division of areas of learning and development into subjects into Lower KS2 and a complete division into subjects in Upper KS2 .
- If this means a more integrated approach, planned outdoor experiences and ample opportunity for play based learning then yes. If it means losing the distinctiveness of subject contributions whilst still prioritising discrete literacy and numeracy sessions then no.
- All the areas of learning and development at EYFS should be extended to KS1 provided it is clear that subject skills are being steadily introduced (see above 1b.)
- At the heart of the opportunities geography can offer is ‘what matters’ to children. In one sense this concerns what is relevant to children (in a parochial, self-interested kind of way) but it also concerns what is relevant to others (the altruism of younger children). Given the interests in the world referred to above and the issues that afflict peoples across the world which children encounter through the media, there is much opportunity to develop a curriculum that ‘matters’, ie that is of concern to children, developed around their geographies (their use/imagining of their active environments), the geographies that affect them (what adults do), and their perceptions of and perspectives on the world they see and how they might contribute to it in an engaged way. An approach that is concerned with problem-tackling (not always solving) and issue oriented is a more persuasive curriculum for children. Geography can contribute to this very strongly.

1 e) What is the case and scope for reducing prescription and content in the programmes of study?

Comments:

- There is a strong case to give curriculum ownership back to the teachers as professionals for encouraging creativity, innovation and individuality – this should also be facilitated and encouraged by the move to greater professional development through the government’s initiative of facilitating further study at Masters level.
- By using areas of learning and development/experience for KS, KS1 and possibly some of lower KS2 and shaping/selecting from existing programmes of study to fit this, some reduction of prescription and content would occur and the curriculum could be made more relevant to each school setting.
- A much looser framework would rely on the professionalism of teachers to select, adapt and shape learning in order to ‘make’ an appropriate curriculum for their pupils and thus give back some degree of ownership to teachers and learners.
- Teachers should be valued and supported to make professional judgements about what particular content to draw on from a common framework and this means that they must be highly trained in order to fully understand the essence and potential contribution of all

ingredients at their disposal.

- Excellent teaching requires excellent teachers who are well trained and who have access to ongoing high quality CPD – in all areas of a curriculum that they are required to teach. Curriculum time should not be dominated by Literacy and Numeracy agendas at the expense of other areas of learning (see above).
- The case is that with an inadequately trained teacher force too much is expected and thus too little is covered in depth. Each subject area, including literacy and numeracy, should be expected to produce a minimum requirement with an attendant range of areas for further development. There is scope in the present Programmes for areas of overlap to be identified and thus be removed from subject strait jackets but be required teaching supported by subject skills. This however requires a considerable change in ITE programmes to produce teachers able to recognise what is required within their own school area.
- A national curriculum provides access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all children to key areas that help us to understand and appreciate the world in which we live. School subjects have been a traditional approach to this since the latter part of the nineteenth century. It may not so much be the approach that schools take to constructing the curriculum, as the essential understanding that teachers need to be able to develop, teach effectively and evolve such curricula. For primary schools it may be that the days of single subject specialism among teachers are largely past; there might be a case for linked subject understanding development in ITT programmes (for BAs) or from degree backgrounds (for PGCEs), such as through Humanities (geography, history, RE) or Environmental Sciences (geography, sciences), or Environmental Arts (geography, art, music). This is very difficult to achieve across the board in ITT (especially PGCE) and it is vital to recognize the continuous investment fully in CPD for all primary teachers.

Questions 2a and 2b relate to Aspect 2: Reading, writing and numeracy

2 a) How might schools be enabled to strengthen their focus on raising attainment in reading, writing and numeracy?

Comments:

- By making what children do more meaningful and relevant, encouraging children to be more engaged, so raising their own levels of attainment and self-esteem
- Obviously not through more of the same. Provide more meaningful and purposeful contexts linked to real life everyday situations and needs in which literacy and numeracy become viewed by pupils as powerful tools to help them achieve desired outcomes.
- By expecting reading, writing and use of number in the whole curriculum. To be well read in the past meant that one had actually read about the real life situations one met on an everyday basis including fact as well as fiction. The presumption was that one became skilled in language through reading good language, (as opposed to learning about phonemes and recognising genres of writing). Clarity in writing was a priority – which in turn begat the beginning of understanding the rules of writing and the great fun there is in using words properly. Most subjects require clear description and explanation and thus should in themselves be vehicles for literary and numerical attainment.

2 b) What can be done to ensure that these vital subjects are taught thoroughly and systematically, and fully integrated within all areas of the curriculum?

Comments:

- A change in the focus on Literacy and Numeracy which has resulted in directed ITE provision which sometimes fails to provide teachers with sufficient understanding to teach the full range of current subjects confidently in schools. Some trainees only receive the benefit of a few hours devoted to teaching and learning in relation to foundation subjects before they enter full time teaching This situation is compounded as CPD in non – core subjects is often viewed as a luxury instead as a necessity for teachers by management
- Teachers need to have greater clarity about what thorough teaching means and how they can be most successfully integrated – currently there is a strong emphasis on teaching discrete subjects which does not encourage such integration. This needs to take place through effective Initial Teacher Education and CPD
- Remove the term ‘literacy hour’ and require literacy to be more contextualised in, for example, ‘humanities’ with a small ‘h’ – history, geography, RE, PSHE, citizenship and some of the more environmental aspects of ‘science’.
- Teachers need to have confidence in their ability to integrate subject areas to effect purposeful learning. This requires confident subject knowledge in all areas, not just those deemed ‘vital’ as otherwise the effectiveness of integrated teaching cannot be fully capitalised.

Question 3 refers to Aspect 3: Modern Foreign Languages

3 What are the best ways of introducing a modern foreign language as a compulsory requirement of the curriculum at Key Stage 2 as recommended by Lord Dearing's Languages Review?

Comments:

- Learning the language in context – learning about the country holistically and encouraging the children to perceive the language as part of the country’s culture in all senses of the word – relating it to their world and experiences
- With a ‘humanities’ curriculum area introduce MFL in small packages by using some of the language of the topic being taught, e.g learn about parts/localities in Europe through/alongside the local language. (many schools are doing this now). Integrate language with a way of life, rather than embark on formal language teaching.
- Within learning the language in context there should be opportunities to develop small scale knowledge of localities, perhaps linking with comparably sized communities - exchanging emails, pictures and video links etc and language as a vital part of this interaction.
- The best way is through developing the golden rule of good manners and respect by learning one’s neighbours language for greetings, enquiries, and then moving onto everyday matters along side one’s own language. The MFL website has already shown the cross- curricular route. For schools with multi-ethnic populations the difficulty will be in deciding upon the best language for all conversation outside English. For schools with no children who are EAL school linking – urban UK as well as overseas links which are vital means of understanding the role of language in any culture.
- there is also the corollary that in order to understand others’ cultures one has to understand their geography and history See http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_5224.aspx

Questions 4a and 4b refer to Aspect 4: Personal Development

4 a) What are the personal, social and emotional capabilities that children need to develop through their schooling?

Comments:

- The capabilities to be developed include empathy, tolerance, compassion and a desire to help and contribute – positive motivation and an ability to express feelings and develop emotional literacy
- Understanding one's own and others' feelings, developing self identity and appreciating the choices one can make are very powerful when combined with empowerment. If children are really allowed to participate in their learning through thought and action rather than being the recipients of tokenism, then they are more likely to develop desirable traits of empathy, critical reflection and responsibility. If they are given ample and ongoing opportunities to participate, then these traits will become practised skills. However, this assumes that skilled practitioners are facilitating this process and hinges again on the provision of highly trained teachers.
- There is a lot of emphasis at the moment on the 'personal' aspects of learning and this is laudable yet needs to be balanced with, rather than being allowed to create tensions with, 'collaborative' aspects of learning. Learning how to work well with each other, being able to evaluate and consider what others have said, done or intend to do and taking responsibility for individual and joint actions are vitally important skills and predispositions that should be taught and nurtured.
- Schools should have expectations – not just developments and even if a family has done a good job in preparing a child for new situations a school has a whole new series of experiences. Collaboration, sharing, empathy, unselfishness – and an overwhelming need to develop a desire to help and become aware of need are all part of the role of a school within a community.

4 b) What is the most appropriate framework for achieving greater integration of these capabilities throughout the curriculum?

Comments:

- The core principles of the Sustainable Schools initiative states that pupils should develop care for oneself, others (inter-cultural and inter-generational), and the environment - and that contexts for learning should be through campus, community and curriculum. This is a most helpful framework as is the framework for Global Citizenship (and there is a lot of good sense in the Statement of Values in the current NC).
- The Sustainable Schools agenda links explicitly to geography's very nature, such as through the development of a local sense of place, appreciation of the ideas of neighbourhood and community, understanding of the interdependence of peoples and the notion of 'global citizenship', contribution to the idea of development and the links to 'environmental citizenship', and delivery of many aspects of the 'eight doorways' advocated in the report both by developing understanding through the curriculum and supporting awareness, appreciation and action through activities in the school and community. Sustainable Schools is also about involving and empowering children through active participation in school and the community. This requires schools to be much more aware and engaged locally with community groups, local councils and such like, where the context is about conserving and enhancing the best for the neighbourhood/area, sustained development for the benefit of the community and the development of 'community citizens' looking not simply to the past not just to the present but importantly to the future: the places we want to, prefer to and might be able to live in – absolutely

at the heart of geography and utterly related to the 'everyday geographies' of children and their families and those living locally. Much of this also links to developing children's understanding of the urban/rural (human-physical) environment.

- A balanced and comprehensive curriculum which encourages children to explore learning collaboratively and being made a ward of global interdependence and being an essential component of their global community This curriculum includes geography, which through its global framework contributes vitally to helping children recognize the 'globalised world' with its parochial nationalism alongside interdependent trade, leisure travel. Geography balances a televisual (rarely balanced) perspective on selected parts of the world and provides insight at a personal scale through instant communication with others wherever they are (internet links, mobile phone networks). These connections, interplays and contradictions are explored through locality studies ,large and small, regional contexts and global placement which open children's eyes wider, focus on places and on variations in the environment. Through these insights children recognize commonalities (similarities) and diversity (differences, variations) and value these rather than conformity. Geography fosters the idea of membership of the global community and the ideas of global interdependence and responsibility – intimate elements of 'global citizenship'– and cannot escape the issues associated with increasing awareness of the wider world: poverty, deprivation, lack of access to, for instance, clean water, resources, education alongside excess in others' use of water, resources such as petrol and foodstuffs and other imbalances..

Questions 5a and 5b refer to Aspect 5: Transition and progression

5 a) How might schools make best use of the information available about prior learning, and information from parents and other professionals working with children, to secure optimum continuity and progression for all children from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, paying particular attention to the key transition points?

Comments:

- By openly valuing and legitimising the diverse forms of knowledge that children bring with them to school and building learning opportunities that capitalise on and challenge existing conceptions and misconceptions.
- Ensure there is adequate and productive contact with parents and other professionals which will enable progression to be understood on both sides of the transition and programmes devised – at home and school – which will provide for the deficiencies and optimise the advantages therein.
- Support the movement to nurture active collaboration between primary and secondary schools regarding appropriate work in the foundation subjects to enable seamless transition through Y6 and Y7 in skills and knowledge even though working with similar content. This gives meaning to the statistical information available for those same children.

5 b) What are the options for providing more choice and flexibility in start dates for children entering primary school, especially summer-born children?

Comments:

- Devolve choice and flexibility in the time of starting school to the family and associated professionals. The family and those involved with the children know the best solution – whether to advance or wait – and this should be returned to. – even if it does mean there has to be provision for more flexible child care for families with both parents working.

6 Do you have any other comments or contributions to make?

Comments:

- It is important to recognise that misinterpretation and / or misunderstanding of the current statutory teaching requirements has in some instances, contributed to a situation in which teachers feel they struggle to fit teaching requirements into a standard primary school day. This is a situation which exists ten years on from the introduction of the statutory National Curriculum and reminds us that whatever the 'new agenda' is it needs to be absolutely clear and accessible to teachers through responsible and thorough training and / or CPD.
- Many teachers are not aware of the 'freedoms' given in '*Excellence and Enjoyment*' (DfES 2003) or indeed of the contents of the National Curriculum, believing that 'given' schemes of work such as those from QCA are inflexible. Arguably then, a lack of understanding about the National Curriculum and the freedoms within it have hindered the capacity of some teachers to understand, innovate and personalise the curriculum and to fit it into a manageable time scale.
- The need to develop capacity for relationship building is one area that needs to be addressed through curriculum provision. A review of the environmental psychology literature provides ample evidence of a key link between our environment (through personal, first-hand transactions) and the development of self-identity. Arguably, a strong sense of self-identity is essential to develop awareness and understanding of others' identities and both are a pre-requisite for building successful relationships. Indications suggest that there is a good deal of preparatory work needed in this area.
- Any new curriculum needs to take account of recent findings in neuroscience (the new science of learning). There are significant indications that many of the interactive approaches and techniques which have been pioneered by educators across the board but which are particularly relevant to geography are supported by our increasing understanding of how the brain works. The main point is that the new science of learning provides valuable evidence to support the case made in geography (a) for fieldwork and (b) for relevance.
- Children learn about the world through a mix of first hand and mediated experiences yet the balance between these has tipped in favour of the latter in recent decades. Children live in a rapidly changing and fragmented world and are bombarded with an enormous array of information. Sifting through this information overload in order to make sense of everyday lives should be a defining aspect of a curriculum for young children. Such a focus would imply that a curriculum should provide opportunities for active learning about our own contexts (and how we connect to the wider world) by valuing, legitimising and extending the diverse, everyday experiences that pupils bring to school. Such a curriculum would include fundamental questions such as:
 - Who am I? (Defining self in terms of attributes, experiences, surroundings and relationships)
 - How do I fit in (to my school, my community, the wider world)
 - How is my everyday life similar (and different) to others? And why?
 - What choices do I (can I) make? (Learning to live well in the world)
 - How do I feel about ... (others, environments, situations)? (Developing emotional literacy)

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply **X**

Here at the Department for Children Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes

No

Thank you for taking time to respond to this review.