

Why have you removed ICT from the National Curriculum?

We haven't. ICT is still a National Curriculum subject and maintained schools will still be legally required to teach it. Ministers have already confirmed that ICT will continue to be a National Curriculum subject at all four key stages when the new National Curriculum comes into force in September 2014.

We have removed the legal requirement on schools to adhere to the specific National Curriculum Programmes of Study, Attainment Targets and statutory assessment arrangements. The existing Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets are still available. The difference is that from September 2012 schools can choose not to follow them, but to teach an ICT curriculum that is more appropriate for their pupils instead.

What do schools have to do?

How schools choose to teach ICT during the period of disapplication is up to them. Some schools are adapting their existing ICT lessons, by introducing new and more challenging topics. Others have redesigned their ICT curriculum completely or are choosing to follow curricula that have been developed by the others, such as subject associations or IT organisations. Schools can still follow the existing Programmes of Study if they believe that is in the best interests of their pupils.

We are not producing new Programmes of Study or Attainment Targets for ICT for teaching from September 2012. New statutory ICT Programmes of Study will be in place for September 2014 alongside the rest of the new National Curriculum subjects. We anticipate that these will be shorter than the existing Programmes of Study and give schools greater freedom to decide what and how to teach.

Will schools have to teach computer science from September 2012?

That's for schools to decide. We do recognise the importance of computer science and would like to see it taught more widely, and more effectively, in our schools. This disapplication period is an opportunity for schools to develop more ambitious and rigorous approaches to ICT. We have seen how the announcement on disapplication has stimulated debate and innovative thinking across the ICT community and with teachers on how the ICT curriculum could be improved. Many teachers responding to the consultation said that they welcomed the opportunity to develop and deliver more ambitious ICT provision, including computer science. Schools and groups of teachers are already taking the initiative and working collaboratively to develop improved ICT provision and produce resources.

How will disapplication impact on GCSEs?

The decision to disapply the Programme of Study and Attainment Targets for ICT will not impact on existing ICT GCSEs and schools can offer them to pupils from September 2012. However, we hope that more schools might use this freedom to offer GCSEs in computing or computer science in addition to or instead of ICT. We will make an announcement on long term GCSE reform later this year.

Doesn't this mean that in practice many schools will scale back their ICT provision to the point that they're hardly teaching the subject at all?

Schools will still be required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum for ICT that meets the needs of their pupils effectively – and they will continue to be held accountable in this regard through Ofsted inspection frameworks. We have also confirmed that ICT will continue to be a compulsory subject at all four key stages in the new National Curriculum from 2014 so schools that choose to withdraw from teaching the subject in the interim period will be at a disadvantage – as will their pupils – when the new National Curriculum is introduced. We believe that the professionalism of schools, head teachers and teachers means that they will continue to recognise their responsibility to their pupils in this important area, and work to equip them with the appropriate ICT-related knowledge and abilities needed for success in education and the wider world.