



Department  
for Education

# **Reforming the national curriculum in England**

**Summary report of the July to August  
2013 consultation on the new  
programmes of study and attainment  
targets from September 2014**

**September 2013**

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## Introduction and background

This report summaries the responses received to our consultation on the draft legislative Order that is being laid under Section 87 of the Education Act 2002, that will give force to the new national curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets from September 2014.

On 8 July 2013, the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education, launched a statutory one-month consultation seeking representations on the draft legislative Order – the Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study) (England) Order 2013 – required to bring the new national curriculum into effect from September 2014.

The consultation was accompanied by the publication of final proposals for the new national curriculum for all subjects and key stages (except for key stage 4 English, mathematics and science) in July 2013. These proposals had been revised following a public consultation between February and April 2013.

A further consultation on the programmes of study for key stage 4 English, mathematics and science will follow in the autumn, in line with the timetable for the reform of GCSE qualifications.

## Overview of respondents

There were 750 responses to the consultation. As some questions invited multiple responses, total percentages listed under any one question may exceed 100%. Throughout the report, percentages are expressed as a proportion of those answering each question, not as a proportion of all respondents.

The organisational breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Maintained primary school	94
Maintained secondary school	66
Parent	60
Teacher	57
Higher education	50
Academy/free school	44
Subject association	39
Consultant/researcher	31
Science-related organisations	29
Local authority	26
Charity	26
History-related organisations	22
Organisations representing teachers	19
Employer/business sector	14
Young person	10
Governing body	8
Organisation representing school children	5
Special school	3
Other <sup>1</sup>	147
<b>Total</b>	<b>750</b>

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<sup>1</sup> Those listed within the 'other' category include those respondents who did not specify a type; those who wished to remain anonymous; and training organisations.

# Summary of consultation responses<sup>2</sup>

## A. Comments on the draft legislative Order

### Question 1: Do you have any general comments on the draft Order?

There were 507 responses to this question.

373 (74%) Yes

134 (26%) No

14 respondents (4%) commented on the draft Order and stated that the language used was technical and not widely accessible.

39 respondents (10%) felt that the revised national curriculum was a considerable improvement in comparison to the version published in February. Respondents were also pleased to see that the Government had listened to the concerns of the profession and subject communities and believed that many schools would now be better equipped for implementation.

108 respondents (29%) commented on the timetable for the introduction of the new national curriculum and felt that many schools would find this challenging. A total of 60 respondents (16%) were concerned that many of the teachers responsible for delivering the new curriculum would be non-specialists, particularly at primary, and called for greater provision for professional development opportunities.

55 respondents (15%) raised concerns about resource implications and the cost of implementing a new curriculum, particularly in the context of wider reform.

A total of 82 respondents (22%) believed that aspects of the new national curriculum may hinder pupils' passion for learning and called for a greater emphasis on the application of knowledge and skills.

51 respondents (14%) requested further clarification on the assessment framework and the tracking of pupil progress. Some of these respondents were concerned about consistency in approach across schools and the ability to make robust comparisons between schools and areas.

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<sup>2</sup> All percentages are given as a percentage figure of those who responded to the question – i.e. as a percentage of those included within the 'yes' category.

## B. Comments on the revised national curriculum subjects

### Question 2: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for English?

There were 372 responses to this question.

188 (51%) Yes

184 (49%) No

44 respondents (23%) welcomed the increased emphasis on spoken language within the curriculum and called for further strengthening of the role of speaking and listening in the development of language and literacy skills. A total of 38 respondents (20%) believed that a greater emphasis was needed on the listening aspect of the speaking and listening content specifically.

21 respondents (11%) thought that the English programmes of study were well structured. They welcomed the notes and guidance for teachers and believed that the revised curriculum for English provided greater clarity and was positively ambitious.

21 respondents (11%) supported the greater focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation. Some respondents stated that the emphasis on developing the correct use of Standard English in schools was highly commendable. A total of 36 respondents (19%) however expressed concern in relation to the more demanding grammatical content included for Years 2 and 4.

52 respondents (28%) said the English primary curriculum was too prescriptive, in particular in reference to the level of specification in the appendices. These respondents argued that this undermined the aims of the new national curriculum in relation to greater professional freedom and were concerned that this may have implications for the provision of a balanced and broadly based school curriculum.

26 respondents (14%) noted that drama was absent from the statutory framework in a structured fashion. Concerns were raised that whilst drama was referred to in the accompanying guidance, it was not recognised as a rigorous discipline in its own right.

**Question 3: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for mathematics?**

There were 353 responses to this question.

154 (44%) Yes

199 (56%) No

62 respondents (40%) believed that the mathematics curriculum was too content rich and placed too great an emphasis on learning facts rather than using, applying and consolidating mathematical skills. Some respondents called for greater emphasis on the development of numeracy skills and ensuring that pupils develop their mathematical understanding.

50 respondents (32%) believed that some mathematical concepts set out in the primary curriculum were being introduced too early. They were concerned that many pupils would not be sufficiently mature to understand this content. In addition, some of these respondents felt that the year-by-year structure was not age-appropriate whilst others were concerned that expectations were set too high, with learning long multiplication and long division at key stage 2 identified as particular examples.

47 respondents (31%) believed that the curriculum moved to formalisation too early, leaving little time to explore and understand mathematical concepts such as place value. These respondents expressed concern that instruction on particular mathematical methods would be introduced before pupils had fully grasped the necessary mathematical concepts and skills.

34 respondents (22%) believed that teachers must have freedom to teach different calculation methods and that the primary curriculum did not fully reflect a variety of learning styles.

19 respondents (12%) felt that there was an over-emphasis on written methods of calculation which was not appropriate for modern society where people were more likely to have access to technological aids.

**Question 4: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for science?**

There were 441 responses to this question.

294 (67%) Yes

147 (33%) No

28 respondents (10%) believed that the revised science curriculum was a considerable improvement and were supportive of the new content. They believed that the suggested topics were clear and the range of content was sensible and would provide a sound basis for progression to GCSE study of both double award science and the individual sciences.

62 respondents (21%) believed that scientific skills and the application of scientific knowledge should be the main focus of the science curriculum, in order to engage and motivate pupils. Many of these respondents felt that there was too much focus on scientific knowledge at the expense of scientific skills, exploration and investigation, particularly at primary.

49 respondents (17%) believed the national curriculum must give clear direction to schools to teach pupils about sex and sex education with confidence so that pupils were fully informed.

A number of respondents also called for the inclusion of more content in a range of areas including fungi, life-saving skills and reference to igneous and metamorphic rocks, whilst others called for an increased number of body parts to be listed including the brain and nervous system. Some respondents expressed concern about teaching evolution, on religious grounds, whilst others believed that the teaching of evolution should be retained at primary.

**Question 5: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for art and design?**

There were 299 responses to this question.

80 (27%) Yes

219 (73%) No

13 respondents (16%) felt that the programmes of study would enable teachers to be more creative in their teaching and would provide greater freedom for schools to choose their own content and develop their own engaging and exciting curricula. 13 respondents (16%) however were concerned whether non-specialist teachers would be able to develop a rich art and design curriculum.

12 respondents (15%) welcomed the revisions to the programmes of study. Some of these respondents specifically welcomed the changes to the aims, the emphasis on creativity and the sense of progression through the subject. 10 respondents (13%) however did not feel that the curriculum provided clear progression for pupils.

21 respondents (26%) felt that there was a lack of reference to digital tools in the revised art and design programmes of study and more widely across the curriculum.

Respondents believed that there was too great a focus on historical fine art rather than contemporary, global or digital art forms. 16 respondents (20%) wanted to see a greater reflection of the breadth, depth and practical elements of art, craft and design, reflecting the full scope of the creative, design and media industries.

17 respondents (21%) felt that the proposed curriculum was not sufficiently stimulating or challenging for pupils in the 21st century. Respondents called for a greater understanding of the nature of the creative process.

**Question 6: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for citizenship?**

There were 358 responses to this question.

180 (50%) Yes

178 (50%) No

50 respondents (28%) welcomed the inclusion of the clear requirement to teach human rights in the programmes of study. Some of these respondents believed that the curriculum should go further and include the teaching of human rights at key stage 3 as well as key stage 4.

18 respondents (10%) welcomed the inclusion of law and international law, while highlighting the lack of reference to international humanitarian law.

66 respondents (37%) called for a greater emphasis on the application of knowledge and greater direction on how pupils should put it into practice to become active and informed citizens.

32 respondents (18%) believed that the curriculum should clearly set out that active citizenship involved genuine social and democratic action.

48 respondents (27%) suggested that greater reference should be made to teaching about the diversity of society and how communities were changing. Some of these respondents also suggested that equalities legislation and freedom of speech should also be referred to.

38 respondents (21%) supported the aim of equipping pupils with the financial skills to enable them to manage their money on a day-to-day basis and plan for future financial needs. Some of these respondents wanted the curriculum to cover the consequences of poor financial management, and better development of financial capability.

34 respondents (19%) wanted greater emphasis on the skills and knowledge pupils need to critically explore political and social issues, weigh evidence, debate and make reasoned arguments, and experience and evaluate ways citizens can act together to solve problems.

19 respondents (11%) felt that there was a lack of detail on content and felt that citizenship education should cover social responsibility, sustainability and set out how a responsible citizen should behave.

**Question 7: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for computing?**

There were 321 responses to this question.

140 (44%) Yes

181 (56%) No

35 respondents (25%) welcomed the changes to the computing programmes of study and believed that the proposed curriculum seemed to be positively highly demanding and challenging.

52 respondents (37%) were concerned about the readiness of primary teachers in teaching the new computing curriculum. Respondents believed that training would be required to support teachers in teaching about algorithms and programming, for example.

37 respondents (26%) believed that there was an imbalance between the emphasis placed on digital skills and computer science, particularly at primary. Respondents felt that pupils needed to be confident in using and applying information technology before they were introduced to computer programming. Some of these respondents were concerned that pupils would be expected to 'pick up' digital skills rather than teachers teaching these as part of the computing curriculum. Some respondents believed that digital literacy and information technology references were vague and would need to be further developed by schools.

26 respondents (19%) believed that the shift in favour of computer science was unnecessary and that many pupils would not need programming skills, unless they were going to pursue a career in the computer science and programming sector.

**Question 8: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for design and technology?**

There were 284 responses to this question.

78 (27%) Yes

206 (73%) No

30 respondents (38%) welcomed the revised programmes of study for design and technology. Respondents believed that considerable improvements had been made to the curriculum. Respondents also supported the increased level of technical sophistication set out in the programmes of study.

15 respondents (19%) welcomed the reintroduction of food technology/cooking.

14 respondents (18%) called for a reference to the consideration of sustainability within the curriculum. Respondents stated that the use of resources including materials, processes and energy was an essential part of designing and manufacturing products in industry and should be reflected in practice in schools.

10 respondents (13%) felt that the curriculum was too narrow and that more information should be provided on how pupils would be assessed.

**Question 9: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for geography?**

There were 302 responses to this question.

114 (38%) Yes

188 (62%) No

29 respondents (25%) welcomed the revised geography programmes of study, in particular the greater demand in relation to a pupils' acquisition of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills; the reduced repetition of content across the key stages; and the rebalancing of human and physical geography.

29 respondents (25%) viewed the strengthening of climate change as a significant improvement in the revised curriculum.

14 respondents (12%) welcomed the increased profile of environmental geography throughout the key stages.

31 respondents (27%) were concerned that the programmes of study did not make sufficient reference to the need for all pupils to develop relevant geographical enquiry skills, which limited the ambition for pupils in this area.

29 respondents (25%) were unhappy with the lack of reference to sustainability and globalisation. Some of these respondents felt that there was a need for pupils to learn about global economies and called for coverage of the 'big debates' at key stage 2 when pupils' views and attitudes are formed.

17 respondents (15%) felt that key stage 2 was too occidental, limited to teaching about the United Kingdom, Europe, and North and South America. Some of these respondents felt that key stage 2 should allow teachers to teach pupils about other cultures which were not well represented in the community.

16 respondents (14%) felt that the proposed curriculum content was too narrow and called for greater breadth and detail.

14 respondents (12%) welcomed retention of fieldwork and outdoor study in the curriculum. Some of these respondents believed that the curriculum should include an explicit reference to the amount and type of fieldwork which should be covered at key stage 3, whilst others believed that time outside the classroom was difficult to organise due to increasing costs.

**Question 10: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for history?**

There were 430 responses to this question.

302 (70%) Yes

128 (30%) No

51 respondents (17%) believed that the revised history curriculum was well-structured and an improvement on earlier versions. Respondents were pleased to see the reduction in the amount of prescribed content, which they felt was better-suited to the available classroom time and freed teachers to exercise their professional judgement in delivering the broad outlines of British history. Some of these respondents felt that cut-off point between key stage 2 and key stage 3 of 1066 (rather than 1688) was an improvement. Other respondents also welcomed the inclusion of more world history, particularly of non-European ancient and medieval civilisations. Respondents also welcomed the changes to key stage 1 which they felt now offered an age-appropriate menu of approaches to history which would allow pupils to experience the rich resources available in their local communities and homes for the study of the more recent past.

43 respondents (14%) strongly welcomed the fact that the Government had listened to the concerns raised by the subject community and were pleased that the programmes of study had been modified accordingly.

34 respondents (11%) specifically welcomed the reduction of the prescribed content at primary.

126 respondents (42%) believed that there was insufficient scope for learning about social history in the history curriculum. This high response rate is in part due to a specific campaign to place greater emphasis on social history which attracted a large number of responses from, amongst others, museums and places of historical interest. Respondents suggested that learning about social history would enable pupils to have history 'brought to life'.

99 respondents (33%) expressed concern about history at key stage 2. Many of these respondents were commenting in relation to the social history campaign and raised issues in relation to the amount of time it would take to teach the key stage 2 content, the focus on political themes, and the need for more options for the study of world history.

44 respondents (15%) thought that the balance at key stage 2 had shifted too far in favour of history prior to 1066 and that it may be difficult to make links to the present. 76 respondents (25%) expressed concern about missing topics including the Tudors, the Victorians, Henry VIII's wives, Elizabethans and Britain from 1930, including the Second World War. Many of these responses were in relation to the wider social history campaign and from those respondents who wanted the key stage 2/key stage 3 cut-off date of 1066 extended.

48 respondents (16%) noted that the history curriculum was still based on the requirement to teach in chronological order. Respondents were concerned that this may mean that some areas would not be age-appropriate and that some pupils may find it difficult to grasp the associated concepts. Some of these respondents felt that pupils should receive a thorough grounding in the subject first before moving onto chronology.

47 respondents (16%) were concerned that there was an over-emphasis on knowledge and learning facts over learning broader historical skills.

32 respondents (11%) believed the curriculum remained too focused on British history.

30 respondents (10%) felt that there was too much content to be covered which would leave little time for teachers to develop different approaches to teaching the subject.

**Question 11: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for languages?**

There were 291 responses to this question.

103 (35%) Yes

188 (65%) No

37 respondents (36%) welcomed the move to allow schools to choose a modern or ancient language at key stage 2. This meant that primary and secondary schools would have the same free choice.

15 respondents (15%) were concerned about the transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3 where a pupil may learn one language at key stage 2 and then be introduced to a different language when they start secondary school.

10 respondents (10%) believed that pupils should not be taught one language through all four years of primary school and favoured a model where pupils are taught one language for the first two years of key stage 2 and a second language in the final two years of key stage

14 respondents (14%) thought the language curriculum lacked detail and were concerned about possible confusion about how language skills should be taught and practised effectively.

**Question 12: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for music?**

There were 276 responses to this question.

74 (27%) Yes

202 (73%) No

17 respondents (23%) welcomed the revised music programmes of study. Respondents specifically noted the increased prominence of creativity and the inclusion of the terms creativity, composing and improvising; the inclusion of the natural play of experimentation at key stage 1 and the inclusion of new technologies for creating music alongside the traditional technologies of musical instruments.

20 respondents (27%) were concerned that the proposed curriculum was too vague and 17 respondents (23%) thought that a greater level of structure and detail was needed to support the teaching of the new music curriculum.

16 respondents (22%) welcomed the inclusion of the phrase 'use technology appropriately' but felt that the curriculum should go further and make explicit reference to the use of technology at all key stages.

10 respondents (14%) believed that the use of language such as 'great composers and musicians', 'musical canon' and 'history of music' within the curriculum implied that the western classical tradition was the only valid route for a pupil's musical experience.

10 respondents (14%) stated that although understanding and performing of music was important, there was too much emphasis on 'knowledge' about music rather than developing a pupils' understanding of music. A small number of respondents also called for references to intellectual property and copyright within the curriculum.

**Question 13: Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for physical education?**

There were 273 responses to this question.

78 (29%) Yes

195 (71%) No

Nine respondents (12%) expressed support for the revised PE programmes of study and noted in particular that the curriculum provided considerable scope for existing good practice to be continued and built upon.

19 respondents (24%) however believed that the PE curriculum was not coherent and might exclude some pupils. A total of 18 respondents (23%) felt that the curriculum only represented a list of activities.

14 respondents (18%) believed that the competitive element in sports, dance and outdoor activities was over-emphasised.

14 respondents (18%) welcomed the inclusion of more performance dance styles at key stage 3. Some respondents suggested that their programme of study should be brought more closely into line with the recommendations from the Cultural Learning Review. Respondents believed that the position of dance remained unclear in the curriculum and that it should be recognised as an essential art form.

13 respondents (17%) believed that there should be a more flexible approach to PE which included a wider range of physical activity to set patterns for life and help combat obesity.

## Next steps

Having carefully considered the responses to this consultation, as well as a range of other relevant factors, the Government has now finalised the Order and the new national curriculum.

The Order is being laid under Section 87 of the Education Act 2002, and will give force to the new national curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets from September 2014, subject to Parliamentary approval.

The new national curriculum is available from GOV.UK at:  
[www.gov.uk/dfe/nationalcurriculum](http://www.gov.uk/dfe/nationalcurriculum).



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