



Curriculum 2000: The first year of implementation

September 2000 to July 2001

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Introduction

1. In December 1997, following the *Review of Qualifications for 16–19 year olds* (Sir Ron Dearing, March 1996) and the subsequent consultation on its recommendations, the government decided that the post-16 curriculum in England was too narrow and inflexible and that it had to be adapted to enable 16 and 17 year olds to compete with their peers in other European countries. It was noted that most of our European competitors offered their young people broader programmes with a much more demanding schedule. The ‘Qualifying for Success’ reforms introduced in September 2000 were intended to encourage young people to study more subjects over two years than had been the case previously, while also helping them to combine academic and vocational study. The reforms included plans to provide ‘world class’ tests to stretch the most able students and give a clearer indication of their abilities. In addition, it was intended that students should develop their competence in the key skills of communication, application of number and information technology (IT).

2. The new qualifications consisted of:

- new general certificate of education (GCE) advanced levels (A levels), set at the same standard as the previous ones, offering candidates the choice of either modular (staged) or end-of-course assessment. In both types of assessment, understanding of the whole syllabus was to be tested
- a new GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) qualification representing the first half of the full GCE A level and worth 50% of the credit
- new ‘world class tests’—advanced extension awards—aimed at the most able students and designed to attract more entries than the existing special papers
- the new advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE), replacing the advanced general national vocational qualification (GNVQ), equivalent in size and demand to a single GCE A level and graded on a similar A–E scale, with GCE AS equivalent GNVQs also available in some subjects
- a new key skills qualification to encourage all young people to develop the essential skills of communication, application of number and IT.

3. In June 2001, the secretary of state asked the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to identify the range of issues underlying the concerns being expressed about the ‘Qualifying for Success’ reforms, popularly known, and referred to in this report, as ‘Curriculum 2000’. The report of phase one of the QCA review was published in August 2001. In summary, the report identified that:

- there was overwhelming support in schools and colleges for the principles of Curriculum 2000
- a number of problems in the implementation of these new qualifications demanded immediate attention; some more structural problems would require attention in the medium term

- rapid action was required to reduce the burden of assessment in the new qualifications
- the key skills qualifications needed to be redesigned and offered more flexibly
- the examination timetable had to be rationalised
- there was a need for more guidance and support to schools and colleges on how to manage the reforms.

4. This interim report presents a summary of findings of survey work on the first year of Curriculum 2000 carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the new qualifications introduced. The judgements are based on visits by inspectors to a sample of 100 secondary schools in England (see the annex). The same sample of schools will be used throughout the life of the exercise. A total of eight subjects are being tracked at GCE AS and A levels: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, business, art and design, biology, geography and physics, and three subjects for the AVCE: business studies, art and design, and health and social care.

5. This longitudinal study involves discussions with managers, teachers and students; observation of teaching; and scrutiny of students' work and of assessment procedures. In most cases, schools are visited twice a year to give an insight into the progress being made within the year. From September 2001, the introduction of Curriculum 2000 in colleges of further education (FE) and sixth form colleges is also being monitored by means of the cycle of full inspections and findings will be included in the final report of this survey in autumn 2002.

Main Findings

Standards and progress

- students' levels of knowledge and understanding were good in over half the courses visited, and satisfactory in all but a very low proportion of the remainder. The work of the highest-attaining students was extremely impressive
- standards in English, geography and business were more consistently good than in mathematics, physics, modern foreign languages and art and design
- higher-order study skills were rarely promoted at the level of specific subjects; the most able students, however, approach their work in a highly sophisticated way
- students following AVCE courses were expected to work to full GCE A-level standard in the first year unlike those following GCE AS courses. Few students had been able to reach this standard
- standards in key skills demonstrated unacceptable variation and there was widespread uncertainty about the levels at which students should be working; standards in communication and IT were higher than in application of number
- in all subjects inspected, students had made at least satisfactory progress between the two visits. There was exceptionally good progress in English, geography and business, other than in the development of application of number.

Teaching and learning

- although most of the teaching was good, there remained too high a proportion of the teaching where planning was unsatisfactory
- teachers had been well prepared to cope with the structure of the new courses, but training in the standards of attainment to be expected from students had been inadequate. Specimen materials had often been of poor quality
- few teachers had been expected to teach a broader range of subjects than previously, except for key skills, general studies and AVCE courses
- teachers often attempted to cover the same amount of ground as they would have done for the first year of the former GCE A-level courses, but in less time than was previously available. This placed undue pressures on both teachers and students, and led, in some cases, to a superficial coverage of the material
- the demands of internal and external assessment are excessive for both students and teachers; the use of the results of assessment to set learning targets for students and to monitor their progress was patchy
- students have fewer opportunities for independent work than was previously the case

- students are generally well motivated, but there was a perceptible decline in enthusiasm as the year progressed and the pressures became more evident.

Guidance and support

- students had chosen appropriate courses in well over 90% of cases, despite incomplete information about subject specifications at the start of the academic year
- the quality of support for students, once they are on a course, was at least satisfactory in over 90% of schools
- staff and students are uncertain about the importance given by universities to results at GCE AS level and how such results might affect the offer of places. They were even more uncertain about the value which universities place on the key skills qualification.

Curriculum model

- there has been a general, if not universal, welcome for the increased choice, flexibility and breadth in most students' programmes
- in practice, the breadth had often been limited, with students continuing to choose subjects within a narrow band of the curriculum
- often, the greater subject coverage had actually been at the expense of aspects of enrichment, including the loss of general studies or extra-curricular activities
- commitment to key skills within, especially, the GCE A-level/AS qualification had been extremely variable; there had been difficulties of integration without artificiality
- the total package still lacks a clear sense of coherence and entitlement
- specifications for syllabuses have often had good features, but the late receipt of these had led to unevenness in their introduction.

Management

- most schools had carefully calculated the costs of the provision for teaching and assessment of the new post-16 courses. There had been only small rises in staffing to accommodate the new courses, but increases in the costs incurred by examination fees
- only a minority of schools had a fully implemented strategy for reviewing the effectiveness of their Curriculum 2000 programme
- although many schools had sought to improve efficiency, they had often rejected the notion of combining courses or year groups, believing that this would have a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching and learning
- the introduction of Curriculum 2000 had not resulted in a significant reallocation of resources to sixth form provision from those of other key stages.

Key Issues for Action

Issues to be considered by the awarding bodies and the QCA, as appropriate:

- clearer identification of the standards of performance to be expected of students on GCE AS and AVCE courses
- closer definition of the subject content and skills development to be covered in these qualifications
- reduction in the burden of internal and external assessment
- improvement in both the timing of the publication of specifications and the range and quality of exemplar material
- provision of better training and guidance materials, particularly in relation to quality descriptors and the introduction of key skills.

It is recognised that a number of the above points are being addressed by the QCA and the awarding bodies in the light of the QCA's reports.

Issues to be considered by providers:

- improved monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning
- development of a rigorous system for evaluating the effectiveness of the complete Curriculum 2000 programme
- allowing students more time and opportunity to develop an independent approach to their studies
- more frequent reviews of progress with students and improvement in action planning and the setting of interim targets
- ensuring that students use their non-contact time to their best advantage
- by working with the universities and using available information, making certain that students are clear about the currency of the full range of these new qualifications in relation to entrance requirements.

Standards and Progress

6. Students' levels of knowledge and understanding were good in over half of the courses visited, and satisfactory in all but about 5% of the remainder. Students studying GCE AS English are often in the largest classes, but generally make the most consistent progress; they have a sound knowledge of set texts, can discuss different interpretations, and are able to identify key thematic and technical features of the works being studied. The wide range of ability in English classes sometimes makes it difficult for teachers to pitch the teaching at the right level, and some students find it difficult to write and talk in the formal register required at this level. GCE AS geography students also make generally good progress. In one school, for example, the advances made by students were such that it was impossible to detect any differences in standards of knowledge and understanding between work

completed for the new qualification and that done for the previous GCE A-level qualification. GCE AS business students are developing well their ability to use correct technical terminology, construct business plans, carry out market research and apply theoretical frameworks to retail and leisure sectors. Most advanced business students are able to combine their schoolwork with work-based placements and raise their standards through practical experience.

7. Progress in GCE AS mathematics and GCE AS physics, although inconsistent, is satisfactory overall and improving. In one school, for example, students of mathematics made good progress between the two visits, moving from well below average performance to a sound understanding of most of the work at GCE AS level. In another school, by contrast, lower-attaining students were demotivated, and only 10 of the 18 students originally starting the GCE AS mathematics course intended continuing with the subject. GCE AS biology courses in some schools tend to recruit a higher proportion of lower-attaining students than some other courses. A significant number of these students had dropped the subject by the time of later visits; the standards achieved by the remaining students were satisfactory. Where standards in biology are high, students show a good understanding of investigative work and have a detailed knowledge of key topics, such as the structure of proteins and enzymes.

8. Progress in modern foreign languages is similarly varied, but generally satisfactory. Some students starting Spanish from scratch, for example, were impressively fluent after only a short time spent studying the language, and in another school students studying GCE AS French and GCE AS Spanish displayed an unusually accurate control of the languages. Sometimes, however, foreign language students' limited grasp of grammar, syntax and vocabulary makes it difficult for them to use the language creatively or imaginatively, or discuss complex issues at the required level. The gap between general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and GCE AS level is especially wide in modern foreign languages, and students who are not able to spend extended periods of time abroad are at a particular disadvantage. The GCE AS qualification has encouraged more students to study a foreign language in year 12, however.

9. Standards in GCE AS art and design are the most polarised. In one school, for example, the work was of stunning quality; it displayed a depth and maturity rarely seen at this level, and dramatically good results had been achieved in, for example, life drawing and the use of oils on canvas. At the other extreme, students in another school had a poor awareness of the course requirements, and their attainment was only marginally better than that expected at GCSE level.

10. The standards demanded of students following AVCE courses are too high. These students are expected to work to full GCE A-level standard in year 12. This is more demanding than the standards required of students following GCE AS courses. Data from some schools show that the same students were being awarded lower grades for AVCE courses than for the GCE AS courses they had followed. The pressure of time and the increased content of syllabuses have meant that the alternative approaches to learning, developed to meet the needs of GNVQ, were

being lost. Inspectors of business studies in particular reported difficulties with the level of demand and the assessment model. The three-year route to level 3 accreditation taken formerly by students via intermediate and advanced GNVQ has been disrupted by the changed demands of AVCE. Increased rigour in vocational subjects may not be best promoted by using criteria developed for use in academic courses. Many teachers believe that students following AVCE are not able to show what they know and can do by means of the assessment model now in place.

11. Students' ability to apply knowledge to new contexts and to analyse, synthesise and evaluate complex and wide-ranging information was less well developed than their subject knowledge and understanding. There were, nonetheless, examples where these skills were clearly in evidence, such as in the best mathematics and physics work. In one business AVCE course, students were able to apply promotional and marketing techniques to new situations with a highly developed awareness of commercial realism. In a geography lesson, the general principles of river hydrology were accurately applied to specific case studies, and in some business studies courses there were good examples of theory being applied to practical case studies. In some cases, low levels of technical competence prevented these skills from being well developed. In modern foreign languages, for example, students who were intellectually capable of dealing with complex GCE AS topics were at times unable to tackle them in the required depth because they lacked the necessary linguistic competence.

12. There are two approaches to developing students' competence in the key skills of application of number, communication and IT. Either these skills are an intrinsic part of the course being studied and form part of the associated assessment criteria of that course; or key skills are studied separately as part of the separate key skills qualification. Generally, students' communication skills were good, although some students found it difficult to avoid speaking and writing in too informal a tone. Strengths in communication were the quality of formal presentations and the ability of higher-attaining students to engage in discussion at a challenging, sophisticated level. The majority of students had good IT skills, and much of their written work was word processed to a high level of proficiency. Students were also increasingly using the Internet as a source of information for topic-based and coursework. Application of number was the least well developed of the three key skills and in some subject areas (for example, business studies and geography) weaknesses in this area sometimes impeded progress markedly.

13. Most of the schools visited are teaching the new key skills qualification; a small number are not. There are widespread uncertainties about the standards expected of students: frequently, students studying at level 2 (intermediate) find the work too simple, whilst those studying at level 3 (advanced) often find it too difficult. Students and teachers raise a number of concerns about the qualification: there are conflicting messages emerging from higher education (HE) about its value as an entry requirement; the Universities and College Admission Service (UCAS) tariff attached to key skills is viewed as insufficient to justify the time spent on it; the overlap with GCSE qualifications and other GCE AS/A-level courses is a source of irritation; and the gathering of evidence is time-consuming and bureaucratic. A

minority of schools, however, regard the key skills qualification as an important and useful development and have introduced it successfully.

14. Inspectors also evaluated students' ability to think logically and form hypotheses. Although weaker students with minimum GCSE qualifications struggled to overcome the gap in demand between GCSE and GCE AS work, there were examples where they rapidly developed these skills, across all subject areas. In one geography lesson, for example, students were able to evaluate the relative strengths of the different explanations for over or under-population and develop hypotheses to explain the phenomena. In modern foreign languages courses, students evaluated complex socio-economic data to produce explanations for social trends. Generally, students found it easier to establish a logical sequence of responses to questions than to formulate hypotheses to explain them; in about 1 out of every 10 cases students failed to think sufficiently for themselves and relied too much on their teachers. At best, however, the work of the highest-attaining students across the range of subjects inspected was impressive in its depth, range and scope.

15. The ability of students to achieve high standards is affected also by their research and study skills. The majority of schools provide students with induction programmes and helpful course guides to help smooth the transition to post-16 work, but it is rare to find study skills that take account of the learning requirements of different subjects actively promoted. Most students are competent at straightforward note taking and learn to research information from a wide range of sources. Students' files show wide variations in their capacity to organise their work effectively; some serve as immaculately-ordered records of work and useful sources of reference; others are the repositories for haphazardly deposited notes. There is some evidence that the time limitations of the new GCE AS qualification are forcing schools to cut back on geography field trips and limiting the research possibilities they provide. More could be done to help students learn how to learn effectively and make the best use of the time available.

16. The new post-16 curriculum has had relatively little impact on the amount of curriculum content covered in the first year of post-16 study. This is partially a reflection of teachers, in their uncertainty, feeling that they must play safe and cover as much ground as they would have done previously in year 12. The assessment demands of the new qualification, however, and the extended external examination timetable have reduced the time available for teaching. In some cases, particularly when specifications and exemplar materials have arrived late, teachers and students have had insufficient time to reinforce learning and the work has been superficial as a result. This is more noticeable in subjects like mathematics and modern foreign languages that depend on the sequential acquisition of knowledge and understanding, than in subjects like geography and English, which are better suited to the modular approach. There was little evidence in the schools surveyed of students taking early module examinations. There are indications that, in some subjects, linear assessment is gaining in popularity.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

17. With very few exceptions, teachers are well informed about their subject, appropriately experienced and well qualified. They often work with an enthusiasm that inspires and engages their students. More experienced staff provide effective support to those new to the profession. In the large majority of lessons, teachers responded clearly to questions raised by students and drew their attention to links beyond the strict confines of the subject syllabus. Many teachers used students' questions as a platform for further discussion, to stimulate thinking and to check understanding. Group work was often used effectively to allow staff to deal with individual student's queries. The quality of teaching improved through the year. By the time of the second visits teaching was at least satisfactory in nearly 90% of lessons, with over 50% judged to be good or better.

18. The overall quality of teachers' lesson planning has also improved over the year. It is good or better in 62% of schools, but unsatisfactory in 14%. The majority of lessons were planned thoroughly, built well on prior learning and took good account of the new specifications and examinations. In a small minority of lessons, however, students' learning objectives were not clearly defined. Planning at course level has also improved since the start of the year. Nevertheless, relatively few departments have clear and detailed schemes of work that are shared with students. As a result, students rarely have a clear overview of their course, key assessment dates or coursework deadlines and they find it hard to gauge the extent of their progress and plan their use of time. There is little evidence of teachers coping with the ability range represented in classes, although some teachers challenge and extend individuals through targeted questions.

19. In the large majority of schools, teachers have appropriately demanding expectations of their students. In a small number of cases expectations are too low and homework fails to extend students' knowledge and understanding. A significant minority of teachers have pitched their level of expectation at the former GCE A-level standard during the GCE AS year. Weaker students, or those aiming only for GCE AS level, struggle as a consequence and their needs are sometimes overlooked.

20. Teachers employ a wide range of appropriate teaching styles suited to the lessons' objectives, demands of the course and students in the class. Although the teaching methodology was generally judged to be appropriate, in about 1 in every 10 lessons it was insufficiently challenging and provided too few opportunities for students to participate. In general, too little account was taken in lessons of students' prior knowledge, or their own reading or research. Some teachers felt obliged to do too much direct teaching in order to cover in good time, the substantial content of the new GCE AS courses. This resulted in teachers often doing too much of the work for students. In other cases, new AVCE specifications had led to more direct exposition of theory than was previously the case with vocational qualifications.

21. In most schools, teachers make good use of at least a satisfactory range of resources. In a small minority of schools, access to IT is extensive; in many more,

both access and use are limited. Students frequently have to use the Internet at home and those without a computer are disadvantaged. Where departments have no home base, resources are scattered around the school, making it harder for staff and students to work effectively.

22. There are wide variations in assessment practice between schools, departments and even courses in the same school. In most cases, work is regularly set and marked, and students are given helpful information on how they can improve. In a small minority of departments, however, homework is infrequent and feedback scanty or inclined to give students too optimistic a view of their progress. Many students following four or more GCE AS subjects find the burden of internal and external assessment excessive. Although teachers rarely make use of assessment information on students to plan lessons, they generally plan learning activities to build on students' strengths and rectify their weaknesses.

23. In just under half the schools, assessment data is used to set targets, although often in an informal or inconsistent way. Schools frequently use value added data to set minimum or baseline target grades, but they are often communicated to students and parents in only general terms, and the review of students' progress against the targets is patchy. Students and staff are not always clear about the distinction between targets and predicted grades, and some staff are concerned that GCE A-level data used to create target grades is not suitable for use with the new GCE AS courses. Most schools attempt to ensure consistency in the assessment of students' work through regular standardisation meetings and double-marking procedures. Despite some improvement during the year, so that arrangements are now good in about 4 out of every 10 schools, moderation of standards and internal verification remain unsatisfactory in a significant minority of schools.

24. Few teachers have had to teach a broader range of subjects as a result of the introduction of the new qualifications, apart from key skills or general studies. The tracking and assessing of key skills within GCE AS courses are perceived by teachers to be an additional burden and they do not always have a confident grasp of the key skills criteria. A small minority of teachers have had to prepare and teach new AVCE courses as a result of the school's attempt to broaden the range of vocational subjects available.

25. The majority of staff have attended training on the new qualifications. However, virtually all training was related to content, format and administration of the new examinations, and relatively little time was devoted to updating teachers' subject expertise. The training attended was of variable quality, although it improved as the year progressed. The proportion of training judged to be good or better rose from 37% at the start of the academic year to 49% at the end. Nevertheless, much of it lacked clarity, particularly in relation to the requisite standards of the new qualifications and, on occasions, contradictory advice was given. Some training was provided too late to inform effective planning. A small minority of schools did not always make best use of the training their staff attended, since information and materials were not shared effectively with other members of the department.

26. Although teachers understand the standards of the new qualifications better than at the start of the year, around half the teachers surveyed at the end of the year remain unclear about what is expected of their students in the new examinations. While a sizeable minority express a growing confidence, many others complain of the lack of grade descriptors at GCE AS level and of the variable, often poor, quality of specimen materials. As a result, many teachers try to teach to GCE A-level standard in the first year of the course and there is little time to consolidate learning. The lack of clarity about standards has had a negative impact on target-setting and progress reviews, since many staff feel unable to assess their students' level of attainment accurately.

27. Students' motivation, while good overall, changed as the year progressed. Initially, students were frequently enthusiastic about their courses, but, as the pressure of examination demands became fully apparent, many became diligent rather than keen learners. A few actively resented the work pressures and found it increasingly difficult to meet deadlines or respond positively to new challenges, especially in periods immediately following examinations and major course assignments.

28. When given the opportunity, students reacted well to working independently, but were given insufficient opportunity early in the course. However, where course specifications required students to undertake work independently, as for example in GCE AS geography fieldwork projects, most did so competently and thoroughly from the outset. A minority of students (fewer than 10% and particularly the lowest attaining), however, found it difficult to adjust to a requirement to show independent thought and action.

29. There were marked contrasts in students' response to new and demanding challenges, which generally reflected the ability range represented in the groups. The more able students coped well with unanticipated demands, but lower-achieving students often found this difficult. In some subjects, such as economics or business studies, students were aiming to reach GCE AS standard after a total of only eight months of study. They had to come to terms with a large number of new concepts rather than, as would be the case in other subjects, to develop ideas with which they were already familiar. Most students coped with this, but typically between 10% and 20% did not; some had dropped out of the course.

30. In most lessons, students were keen to show that they were following the discussion and line of argument. However, in poorer lessons, their replies to questions rarely influenced the direction of the lesson; consequently, more closed questions were asked than open ones, and students then gave brief and undeveloped replies.

31. Relationships with teachers were usually excellent. Students respect their teachers' subject knowledge and the hard work that they put into preparing their lessons and marking their work. In turn, teachers recognise the diligence and care most students take over their work and their willingness to meet tight deadlines.

32. Overall, the majority of students, and in particular those taking four or five subjects, find themselves working under considerable pressure. Such is the pace with which most courses are taught that they have little time to reflect on or review their learning. Some synoptic modules are designed to fulfil this function, but most of these are taught at or near the end of courses. There is little conclusive evidence from the survey to indicate how successful synoptic modules are in giving students a coherent overview of their courses, and in providing a reliable means of assessing their attainment over their programme as a whole.

33. Many students take insufficient time to read widely around their subjects. Others, for reasons linked to timetable clashes, have had fewer opportunities than expected to take a full part in activities such as work experience and, in some cases, fieldwork or other out-of-class activities related to their studies. Many students have timetables that do not take account fully of their need to receive independent careers education and guidance. Private study time has been much reduced, limiting the extent to which students can develop their learning through independent study.

Guidance and Support

34. In around three quarters of schools, appropriate guidance and information are provided for students progressing from year 11 into year 12. Students are most often interviewed about options by senior staff and find the information gained helpful in making their choices. In some schools, the opportunity to discuss the post-16 work with students in the year above is provided and is particularly valued. Students and their parents are well informed about the range of subjects and post-16 study in the school. Schools produce informative prospectuses and handbooks providing information about available courses. However, the lack of availability of syllabus specifications early in the academic year has meant that students were sometimes poorly informed about the GCE AS content and organisation at the time of making initial choices for the sixth form.

35. Students are less positive about the information provided by the careers service and find that this rarely adds to what is provided by their teachers. In a few schools collaborative arrangements with other schools and with colleges support a more comprehensive and consistent presentation of information about a broader range of opportunities for post-16 study. Most schools provide an induction programme to the sixth form, which sometimes takes place at the end of year 11 to avoid using curriculum time in year 12. In a few schools, the induction programme is designed to give students the opportunity to review their subject choices, although most schools try to minimise these changes.

36. A significant minority of students changed their subjects after starting year 12, but this varies greatly from school to school. In a few schools, no students dropped subjects and staff had provided good guidance and close support for students. In some schools, extra lessons were provided to support students who found the level and pace of work too demanding.

37. Arrangements for supporting progression of students from year 12 to year 13 were often not established until late in the year, with many schools unsure of the procedures that would be needed. As a result, students expressed concern about the availability of advice following the GCE AS results, particularly regarding the 'cashing in' of GCE AS results and the range of choices in year 13. The arrangements for formal advice and guidance from year 12 to year 13 are, as yet, underdeveloped. Most schools anticipate that students will continue with three of their subjects into year 13. Schools recognise that there will be an obligation to provide a GCE A-level year for all subjects where students wish to continue with them.

38. The appropriateness of course choice has been at least satisfactory in almost all schools. Entry requirements have not generally changed as a result of the introduction of GCE AS level and remain the same as for GCE A level. Schools, on the whole, regard the outcome of the two-year course as the overall objective rather than GCE AS level itself.

39. The proportion of the sixth form students leaving courses has been similar to that of previous years, varying from about 5% and 10% from the start of the year. A few schools achieve retention rates very close to 100%. These higher retention rates are in schools with well-developed advice and guidance strategies, effective monitoring procedures, and often very committed students.

40. The quality of tutorial support is at least satisfactory in the large majority of schools. Support is good in schools with well-established arrangements for tutorials and individual progress reviews. Students are generally allocated a personal tutor from amongst the subject teachers they meet. Students are well known to their tutors and the pastoral support they provide is mainly effective. Tutorial sessions generally take place weekly. A few schools lack adequate and consistent arrangements to provide tutorial support to students. In these schools, the role of the personal tutor is ill-defined and there is a lack of regular tutorial review.

41. The arrangements for assessing students' work vary in nature and effectiveness between subjects, and the guidance on the requirements for homework and the time needed for private study are often not determined for the school as a whole. Students' use of the private study time in school is often inconsistent and not effectively managed. Students' progress is generally monitored by teachers marking homework and administering tests periodically. Most schools provide progress reports twice or three times in the year to which all subject teachers contribute. Overall assessment of student performance is usually made each term. In some schools students are interviewed by the head of sixth form or another senior member of staff during the first term to check progress. Individual action planning by students is underdeveloped in most schools, however.

42. The use of value added data and the quality of students' action planning were unsatisfactory in about 35% of schools and good in only about 25%. Students are guided onto GCE AS or other courses based on GCSE grades. These results

are not used as a basis for further guidance during the GCE A-level programme, however. Target grades are used effectively in a minority of schools to monitor and check students' progress. At the beginning of the GCE AS courses, teachers were generally unsure of standards required in the new examinations and so were reluctant to set targets. Value added data is used well in some schools to monitor the quality of subjects and the effectiveness of teaching in departments. There is very little use of value added data by careers staff.

43. The quality of advice on entry to HE is at least satisfactory in 96% of schools. Uncertainties about the importance that universities will place upon GCE AS results have made it difficult for teachers to provide clear guidance to students in the first year. Students are concerned about the use that HE institutions will make of GCE AS results and whether these results might adversely affect the offers of places they receive. Despite these uncertainties, schools are generally continuing to follow their well-established procedures for supporting students in preparing applications for HE. The great majority of students have access to well-resourced careers libraries and good quality materials from HE institutions.

Curriculum Model

44. Schools have responded to the opportunities of Curriculum 2000 with varying degrees of success, although most have welcomed the increased choice, flexibility and breadth in students' programmes. In the best cases, the senior management team (SMT) has looked at the scope and range of courses offered, related these to a careful survey of students' aspirations, surveyed courses available from other local providers and set out clear development plans for the changes they intend to make. In the weakest cases, developments are left to departments to cope with and there is poor co-ordination of courses offered to students. In the large majority of cases, schools have attempted to implement Curriculum 2000 by providing students with the opportunity and encouragement to take at least four courses at level 3, that is GCE AS level or AVCE. The number of new courses introduced in response to Curriculum 2000 has, however, been few and most often these were under active consideration before the reforms were introduced.

45. In the majority of schools, key skills courses have been introduced cautiously. Many schools describe an integrated model of provision for key skills as their ideal, but few have managed to implement such a programme. In most schools, implementation of key skills is on a pilot basis and there is not widespread enthusiasm for key skills amongst staff. While schools acknowledge the importance of key skills, many regard the course requirements and assessment to be difficult to implement efficiently. Students generally have a low regard for the value of the qualification.

46. The breadth of curriculum offered by schools is at least satisfactory in the large majority of schools, with over half judged to be good or better. In schools with low numbers of students, the range of courses is more restricted and some combinations of subjects have become impossible. There is little evidence of

students being encouraged to choose to take a contrasting subject within their selection and many, while studying more subjects, are not following a dramatically broader curriculum. It is clear from interviews with students that a large majority believe it is good to have the opportunity to study four subjects to GCE AS level. Schools acknowledge that they must respond to student demand for courses and have made great efforts to do so.

47. In the large majority of schools, students are able to follow the combination of courses which they want. In small sixth forms, however, where the number of possible combinations is reduced, the dilemma for some students is either to take a modified selection of subjects or move to another institution. In some cases, schools go to considerable lengths to provide what students want, including starting to teach groups at 07:30 hours. Teleconferencing and distance learning have been tried in a few schools, with little success.

48. The proportion of non-contact or undirected time for students is much reduced compared with previous year groups. On average, students have less than 10% of their time not allocated to planned learning. In around 20% of schools, there is no unallocated time allowed to students. The proportion of non-contact time varies greatly and, in a few schools, remains at relatively high levels of around one quarter of the timetabled hours. To make the most of students' time in school, some schools require students to be at supervised workstations when they are not in classes with teachers. In these situations, students are often positive about how much more they can learn.

49. Most schools have offered an enrichment programme in addition to four course options, but around one third of schools are providing less than satisfactory enrichment programmes. Some schools have chosen to enhance enrichment programmes by including key skills elements in the teaching of general studies, for example. In other schools, particularly where the school has tried to implement key skills fully, enrichment programmes have been reduced. In response to the points tariff of UCAS for key skills qualifications, some schools have decided to provide students with some key skills training, but have also entered them for GCE AS examinations in critical thinking and general studies as a way of gaining a greater number of points. In some cases, where schools have chosen to implement key skills courses and accreditation fully, they have abandoned enrichment programmes altogether, to the students' detriment.

50. In the large majority of cases, schools believe that they are preparing students solely for HE. As a result, very few schools have carried out surveys of local employment needs, and employment data available via careers companies and government agencies are not taken into account when planning courses. Many schools consider that they have expertise in the teaching of academic courses and have not introduced vocational courses, because these are available from other providers locally. In some cases, headteachers describe local employment opportunities as being very varied and there is no coherent message from local employers about their needs. Thus many headteachers and many of their staff are

concerned with securing educational progression for their sixth form students rather than responding to local employment needs.

51. Overall, there is a good match between student aspiration and the provision of courses offered. In the large majority of schools, staff find out what students want through interviews and through trial option sessions. Most schools are keen to provide courses which students ask for. Where guidance and advice are good, staff try to give students comprehensive information about what is available and to raise their awareness of options unknown to them previously. In those schools in the most difficult socio-economic circumstances, the raising of students' aspirations in this way is given a very high priority.

52. In the main, schools have effectively planned for the new qualifications. In the majority of schools, there has been an increase in overall contact time, even though the contact time in individual subjects has been reduced. Some schools have adopted new timetables. Planning in most schools has been for the two-year period of introduction of the new qualifications, although planning for the second year has been, of necessity, speculative. Most schools do not require choices to be made until the examination results are known, with students expected to continue with all courses at GCE A level until this point.

Management

53. Where schools are collaborating with other local providers, they have been doing so for some time. There are no cases where collaboration has resulted directly from the introduction of Curriculum 2000. In about one quarter of schools, the SMT has not considered collaboration as a way of improving provision. Schools nevertheless make local collaborative arrangements year by year to meet the needs of individual students. These cover, for example, a student attending media studies classes and students attending a twilight course in IT at a local college of further education. Religious education and music are often provided through local collaboration. Some courses such as media studies and music technology are being considered as suitable areas for collaboration because of the high capital costs involved in establishing them. It is clear from interviews with headteachers that schools have been engaged in a competitive culture and the move to collaboration can be a delicate and sensitive matter. Particularly in schools with small sixth forms, however, collaboration has been seen as a means of helping the school to survive.

54. The large majority of schools have carefully calculated the cost of the provision for the teaching and assessment of the new post-16 courses. However, in around one eighth of schools, costing by the management team was judged to be less than satisfactory. There are clearly increased costs associated with the introduction of Curriculum 2000. There have been only small rises in staffing to accommodate the new courses and in many cases group sizes have increased, thus making the teaching more efficient. There have, however, been increased costs associated with the resourcing of courses. The largest relative increase has been in the costs involved in examinations. A school with 340 students in the sixth form has

calculated that the additional costs of examination fees are in the order of £30,000. In a school with a sixth form of 180 students, the added administrative costs have increased by some 4,000 hours and teaching by 5,000 hours; during the examination period the school was spending £100 a day on postage. The greater demand on rooming due to increased examination hours has also, for many schools, reduced the income derived from lettings to other organisations. In minority subject areas, schools cite costs of provision at around £7,000 for each student.

55. The effort put into monitoring standards in the new qualifications varies widely. In some schools, headteachers were unaware of weakness in particular departments that became apparent during the survey through direct observation and through interviews with staff and students. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is undeveloped in many schools and only a minority in the survey had robust systems in place. The best practice involves regular reviews of programmes against targets derived from data on prior attainment. These reviews are effective when students and teachers exchange views on progress, based on assessment of performance, and set targets in the light of their discussions. Other good practice includes lesson observations by peers and by managers, and the scrutiny of students' work and assessment data. The involvement of pastoral staff, such as form tutors, has proved to be effective and to provide a more rapid reaction to changes in student performance. Student questionnaires have provided very useful feedback to staff on the success or otherwise of particular teaching and learning strategies and organisation. The majority of schools monitor quality by considering examination results, and staff are engaged in discussion of this data. An annual discussion is, however, less effective in raising standards than frequent reviews, because weaknesses in teaching and learning are more difficult to identify over a long period.

56. The implementation of Curriculum 2000 has had little impact on the staffing of schools. This correlates with the low level of new courses being introduced into the curriculum, many of these courses having been planned before Curriculum 2000 was introduced. Where staffing has increased, this has been because of a rise in the numbers of students. Where new subjects have been introduced into the curriculum, there has been a planned increase in staff numbers to ensure the subjects can be taught through to GCE A level. In particular, in those schools introducing the teaching and assessment of key skills for all year 12 students, staff are being deployed in new ways. In some schools, there have been appointments of key skills co-ordinators, whereas, in others, responsibilities have been shared out between deputy headteachers and heads of department.

57. In those schools where GCE A level was taught previously to combined groups of year 12 and year 13 classes, this practice has now been largely discontinued. A few schools are considering combining, for teaching purposes, courses such as AVCE art and design with GCE AS art. Many schools have rejected the notion of combining courses or year groups, recognising that it would have a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching and learning. The majority of schools have reduced the time allocated to teaching GCE AS courses or propose doing so next year. Typically subjects which were allocated five hours teaching per week at GCE A level have been reduced to around four hours teaching for GCE AS level.

There have been no effects of the new provision on other key stages. Staffing analyses show that there has been no significant switching of resources to sixth form staffing from other parts of the school.

58. Management of the new provision is at least satisfactory in the large majority of schools, with nearly half judged to be good or very good. Features of good management were extensive consultation with staff, resulting in clear, well-communicated decisions, thorough monitoring of standards and a clear definition of roles within the school. In the best schools, audits of what has happened to date are already informing policy and practice for the second year of implementation. Thorough and careful counselling of students onto courses, backed up by good quality monitoring and support, has led to high levels of retention and confident and satisfied students.

Annex: Schools involved in the survey

All Saints Catholic School and Technology College
Arthur Mellows Village College
Beaverwood School for Girls
Belper School
Benfield School
Bennett Memorial Diocesan School
Benton Park
Beverley Grammar School
Biddulph High School
Broughton Hall High School
Buckingham School
Bushfield Community College
Chew Valley High School
Clyst Vale Community College
Coopers School
Cowley High School
Driffield School
East Barnet School
Eastbury Comprehensive School
Eltham Hill Technology College for Girls
Ernest Bevin College
Exmouth Community College
Feltham Community College
Fitzharrys School
Fullbrook School
Garibaldi School
George Abbot School
Guildford County School
Guthlaxton College
Hastingsbury Upper School and Community College
Hatfield High
Heath Park High School
Hendon School
Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre
Howden School
Ken Stimpson Community School
Kingsfield School
Longsands College
Longslade Community College
Lord Lawson of Beamish Community School
Lytham St Annes High Technology College
Mangotsfield School
Market Rasen De Aston School
Mascalls School
Medina High School
Mill Hill High School
Mill Hill School
Millom School

North Bromsgrove High School
Northgate High School
Norton Hill School
Notre Dame Catholic High School
Ossett School
Our Lady's Catholic High School, Lancaster
Outwood Grange School
Park House School
Pimlico School
Prendergast School
Queen Elizabeth's Mercian School
Queensbury School
Rainhill High School
Saffron Walden County High School
Saints Peter & Paul Catholic High School
Sandown High School
Shenfield High School
Sir Bernard Lovell School
Somervale School
Spennymoor Comprehensive
Sprowston High School
St Crispin's School
St Cuthbert's High School
St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School
St Margaret's C of E High School
St Peter's School
St Wilfrid's Catholic Comprehensive School, Crawley
St Wilfrid's Catholic High School
Sutton Centre Community College
Tapton School
Tendring Technology College
The Armthorpe School
The King's School
The Meden School
The Ravensbourne School
Thomas Tallis School
Trinity School Belvedere Church of England Voluntary Aided
Turton High School
Vale of Ancholme School
Wednesfield High School
Wellsway School
Westwood High School
Wheatley Park School
Wilmslow High School
Windsor Girls' School
Wood Green High School
Woodhouse High School
Wymondham High School
Wyndham School

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