

# Consultation

## *Proposal to make the P scales part of national curriculum assessment*



### Have your say

QCA is consulting on behalf of the Secretary of State on a proposed change to make the P scales part of national curriculum assessment. The consultation runs from 7 September to 29 November 2006. We would like to hear your views. To participate in the consultation please visit the QCA website at [www.qca.org.uk/consultations/](http://www.qca.org.uk/consultations/) and complete the online questionnaire before 29 November 2006.

### The proposal

Ministers wish to make the use of the P scales and collection of P level data mandatory from summer 2007. To enable this change to happen, the Secretary of State proposes to make the appropriate Orders and Regulations under section 87 of the Education Act 2002 so that P scales become part of national curriculum assessment.

The government wants the P scales to be used to report the attainment of pupils with special educational needs working below national curriculum level 1 at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3. Schools will be required to provide information on the progress of these pupils in the form of P levels. This will apply to the national curriculum core

subjects at key stages 1 and 2, and to the core and foundation subjects at key stage 3.

The P scales were first developed to enable target setting for groups of pupils with special educational needs. P level data have been collected from schools on a voluntary basis since 1999.

The mandatory collection of P level data will fill a gap in the national information currently available about the attainment and progress of pupils working below level 1, both in special and mainstream schools. It will enable national recognition of these pupils' achievements.

### The P scales

The P scales are differentiated performance criteria that set out

attainment for pupils working below level 1 of the national curriculum. They describe some of the important knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils may gain from the subject programmes of study.

The P scales are not a curriculum in themselves. They are used for pupils aged 5–16 with special educational needs working towards level 1. P scales are particularly relevant to pupils with learning difficulties, whose attainments may not register on the national curriculum level descriptions.

The P scales are not applicable for recently arrived children and/or those new to English, unless it has been established that a special educational need is likely to be the only reason for performance below the expected

level. Children learning English as an additional language and working towards level 1 will continue to be recorded as 'W' for data submitted to the Department for Education and Skills.

The P scales closely follow the pattern of assessment for the national curriculum levels 1–8. P scales use eight performance levels to show the learning that leads to national curriculum level 1. Levels P1 to P3 in each scale show the earliest levels of general attainment and are common across all subjects. Levels P4 to P8 show subject-related attainment.

### Where can I find further information on the P scales?

There are P scales for each national curriculum subject and for personal, social and health education (PSHE), and religious education (RE). The P scales for all national curriculum

subjects were published in *Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties* (QCA, 2001), which can be found at [www.nc.uk.net/ld/index.html](http://www.nc.uk.net/ld/index.html). This publication includes examples of opportunities and activities for each subject at key stages 1–4.

In 2004, the P scales for English, mathematics, science and ICT were revised. The revised P scales for these subjects supersede those published in 2001 and can be found at [www.qca.org.uk/8798.html](http://www.qca.org.uk/8798.html).

Further guidance and information on using the P scales are available at [www.qca.org.uk/13632.html](http://www.qca.org.uk/13632.html).

### When will the changes happen?

QCA will advise the Secretary of State on the results of the consultation in December 2006.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation and the agreement of the Secretary of State, QCA will notify all schools, local authorities and other relevant organisations of the changes to the national curriculum primary and secondary handbooks in early 2007.

Revisions to reflect the changes will be made to the online national curriculum documents and through a paper insert for the handbooks, which will be sent to all schools, local authorities and other relevant organisations in England. The necessary amendments will also be made to national assessment software and documentation.

#### Contact information

Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority  
83 Piccadilly  
London W1J 8QA

Telephone 020 7509 5555  
Minicom 020 7509 6546  
Email [info@qca.org.uk](mailto:info@qca.org.uk)  
[www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

#### Further information

For more information please contact:  
[pscales@qca.org.uk](mailto:pscales@qca.org.uk)

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