



Dear Colleagues,

## **Report of an Evaluation of the Arrangements for the Implementation of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum**

This report considers how well schools, the Department of Education and the Partnership Management Board, are working together to ensure the successful implementation of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. While highlighting some positive features in relation to the progress made, the report also highlights a number of areas for improvement in the implementation process. It indicates, for example, that some of the training provided, particularly for school principals, has not been sufficiently successful in preparing them to lead implementation within their schools.

The report also indicates the need for a more strategic approach by the Department of Education in communicating the arrangements for the Revised Curriculum, to groups such as parents and the wider community.

The important role that schools have in ensuring successful implementation should also be noted, and the report emphasises the need for some principals to engage more fully in the change process in the period of transition from the existing to the revised curriculum.

I am pleased to note that both the Department of Education and the Partnership Management Board have taken the Inspectorate's recommendations seriously, and that progress is being made in a number of key areas. I am hopeful that our planned, second report will highlight an improvement in the quality of support offered to schools at this time of significant change.

Improvements are also important to ensure the best possible provision for the children and young people whom we all strive to serve.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marion J Matchett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

**Marion J Matchett CBE**  
**Chief Inspector**

# Education and Training Inspectorate

## An Evaluation of the Arrangements for the Implementation of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum in Primary, Special and Post-Primary Schools

2006-2007



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE



# CONTENTS

<i>Section</i>		<i>Page</i>
1.	INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT .....	1
2.	FACTORS THAT ASSIST PROGRESS ..... IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RNIC IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	3
3.	FACTORS HINDERING PROGRESS ..... IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RNIC IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	6
4.	FACTORS THAT ASSIST PROGRESS ..... IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RNIC IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS	9
5.	FACTORS HINDERING PROGRESS ..... IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RNIC IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS	10
6.	FACTORS THAT ASSIST PROGRESS ..... IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RNIC IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS	11
7.	FACTORS HINDERING PROGRESS ..... IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RNIC IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS	14
8.	RECOMMENDATIONS AND ISSUES ..... FOR ACTION	17
9.	CONCLUSION .....	20
	ANNEX - Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum ..... Survey Selection of Schools	21



## 1. Introduction and context

- 1.1 The Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (RNIC) is a major development in the schools' sector in Northern Ireland (NI). The implementation strategy extends over a number of years and will affect ultimately all levels of schooling. The Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) in NI face a significant professional challenge in supporting the implementation of the revised curriculum over the next few years.
- 1.2 The successful implementation of the RNIC is a key priority for the Department of Education (DE); an evaluation by the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) of the implementation of the revised curriculum will take place over the full period of the implementation. This is the first report.
- 1.3 The Partnership Management Board (PMB), a strategic planning group representing the ELBs, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and their key partners, has drawn up the strategy for the implementation of the RNIC.
- 1.4 The professional development of teachers is an important element of the strategy. Much of the work will be carried out within schools. In addition, CASS will provide training for the relevant groups of teachers during the period of implementation.
- 1.5 The implementation of the RNIC began in 2005–2006 with in-service training (INSET) for principals, co-ordinated by the Regional Training Unit (RTU). There was also initial INSET for curriculum leaders and teachers. In addition, INSET, led by CCEA, was provided for a small number of post-primary schools (15) participating in the key stage 3 (KS3) Pilot.
- 1.6 As part of the evaluation process for this report, the Inspectorate visited 31 schools (see Annex) and engaged in discussions with principals, other school leaders, curriculum teams and teachers during the Spring Term 2007. In addition, inspectors visited 36 INSET sessions for the teachers of years 1, 5 and 8.

- 1.7 A number of quantitative terms are used in the report when commenting on aspects of provision for the revised curriculum. These terms should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

- 1.8 In assessing the various features of the provision for the revised curriculum, inspectors relate their judgements to six performance levels which may be interpreted as follows:

LEVEL	DESCRIPTOR	TERMS USED IN REPORTS
1	Outstanding characterised by excellence.	Outstanding or excellent provision.
2	Consistently good	Strengths with no significant areas for improvement (AFI).
3	Many good features but some areas for improvement	Strengths in important areas with a small number of areas for improvement.
4	Overall sound but some AFIs which need to be addressed	Strengths in many aspects of the educational/pastoral provision with a few important AFIs to be addressed.
5	Significant weaknesses	A few strengths but important AFIs which require prompt action.
6	Poor	Major shortcomings which require urgent action.



## 2. Factors that assist progress in the implementation of the RNIC in **primary schools**

- 2.1 In a majority of the primary schools visited, there was discernible progress being made in the implementation of the revised curriculum. These schools are characterised by forward-looking, proactive leadership and a supportive staff who demonstrate a positive attitude towards the rationale of the RNIC. There is a willingness to collaborate in order to effect the necessary changes and a realisation that working towards the implementation of the revised curriculum is a gradual process that will evolve over a period of time.
- 2.2 The forward-looking principals are those who embrace the main tenets of the RNIC and exercise effective leadership, delegate responsibilities appropriately, and reassure and inspire staff.
- 2.3 The management of the roll-out was good when principals proceeded at a measured pace and took sufficient account of the developmental stage of the school. These principals provided detailed guidance for the staff, set relevant and realistic targets and placed clear organisational arrangements in place.
- 2.4 Other schools that have embedded a self-evaluative culture and have had a meaningful experience of other initiatives were also receptive to the new ideas and approaches inherent in the revised curriculum. In these instances, the staff are willing to reflect on, review and evaluate their own practices, in particular, their approaches to learning and teaching.
- 2.5 Several schools made effective use of the Inspectorate's publication, 'Together Towards Improvement' (TTI), to structure their self-evaluation and to prepare for the revised curriculum. This work was often carried out in conjunction with a comprehensive audit of existing provision that provided a firm baseline for the introduction of the RNIC. There is a clear understanding that this work requires quality time and systematic and formal approaches.

- 2.6 The majority of schools in the sample had devised a good quality school development plan (SDP) which they reviewed and updated regularly to take account of the RNIC; it contains suitable action plans to structure the development work focused on the revised curriculum. Planning is being reviewed to reflect the proposed changes, and in some cases, this work is linked appropriately to Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD).
- 2.7 The effective consolidation of good practice and the staff development gained from participation in previous initiatives has prepared several schools well for considering the new approaches to the revised curriculum. The development work associated with the Enriched Curriculum, for example, resulted in an initial preparation for the RNIC in some schools.
- 2.8 Effective linking between the development work for the RNIC and PRSD in many schools has been a positive step towards embedding the process of planning for the revised curriculum.
- 2.9 A growing, shared understanding of the revised curriculum is emerging in several schools through whole staff discussion and collaborative working. In other schools, the teachers consider that they are moving towards the goal of a common understanding.
- 2.10 There has been a renewed commitment to team working, manifested by teachers meeting regularly, sharing experiences, observing one another's practice on aspects of the revised curriculum and disseminating good practice. The RNIC is used in some schools as a vehicle for self-evaluation leading to improvement.
- 2.11 The positive attitude of the teachers and their ability to adopt a consensual approach has created a way forward for the revised curriculum.
- 2.12 Most teachers can articulate the rationale and the themes underpinning the 'Big Picture' of the RNIC. They are gaining a firm grasp of the new elements such as the focus on skills, personal capabilities, personal development and assessment for learning (AfL). Most schools have

introduced aspects of AfL. The teachers are gaining in confidence in using active learning approaches and in sharing the learning objectives with the children at the start of lessons.

- 2.13 The majority of the schools reported that INSET was sound to good and had a positive influence on approaches to learning, teaching and assessment associated with the revised curriculum. In addition, there was a suitable focus on the 'Big Picture'.
- 2.14 The training programmes were delivered consistently across all five ELBs. The objectives of the course were clear and the content was consistent.
- 2.15 The phased nature of the implementation was emphasised; it was acknowledged during each training session that all teachers were at a different stage of preparedness, and that each school would find its own starting point for further development.
- 2.16 The working relationships between CASS officers and the teachers were good and the presentations ranged from satisfactory to very good. There was a suitable balance between input and workshop activities, and the teachers were given sufficient time throughout the sessions to reflect on the key messages.
- 2.17 The quality of the resources and support materials provided for teachers on the training days was good and the sessions were planned carefully in order to incorporate the learning and teaching strategies to be promoted at the foundation stage (FS) and in KS2.
- 2.18 The involvement of schools in cluster groups has been a positive development; in particular, it has resulted in the sharing of ideas gained from training courses and the instigation of debate and discussion around common problems. The cluster meetings were beneficial in stimulating discussion and debate with other practitioners on issues such as Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and learning outcomes.
- 2.19 In many instances, the effective support for schools from their CASS Link Officers facilitated the implementation of the revised curriculum in a more meaningful manner.

### 3. Factors hindering progress in the implementation of the RNIC in **primary schools**

- 3.1 For a significant minority of primary schools, the Leading Learning Conferences were an ineffective introduction to the roll-out of the revised curriculum.
- 3.2 In an era of unprecedented change, additional challenges and uncertainty in education, characterised by a plethora of high level initiatives, a clearer 'route map' towards the strategic implementation of the revised curriculum and the associated assessment arrangement, needs to be drawn.
- 3.3 The lack of universal support from school principals is a deterrent to the effective implementation of the revised curriculum.
- 3.4 In a significant minority of the schools visited, there is scope for improvement in the quality of the preparation and the state of readiness for the implementation of the revised curriculum.
- 3.5 These schools have yet to engage fully with the RNIC and have not commenced the process of self-evaluation. In these instances, there has been little professional dialogue in the school in relation to the implications of the revised curriculum, in particular, for learning and teaching. It will be important for these schools to devote more quality time to the key areas of the revised curriculum and to the provision of follow-up activities to drive forward the process.
- 3.6 In a significant minority of the schools visited, the SDP is ineffective and contains a list of priorities on which there has been little action. A few schools have an SDP but they have yet to incorporate provision for the RNIC. It will be necessary that they draw up an achievable and systematic SDP with associated action plans in order to implement the key areas of the RNIC and to map existing practice against the 'Big Picture'.

- 3.7 In a few schools, the Principal needs to lead change in a more effective and proactive manner and to carry out audits of existing provision which is fit for purpose.
- 3.8 The place of content in a skills-infused curriculum as manifested, for example, in the learning area of 'The World Around Us', needs further clarification. The CCEA and CASS should provide more information for practitioners on this important area.
- 3.9 The unavailability of finalised documentation and resources caused concern in schools; some key documents were not published on time for the roll-out of the revised curriculum. The teachers had not received the approved curriculum content of the areas of learning in which to develop the skills.
- 3.10 The lack of on-line learning support through Learning Northern Ireland (LNI) is a major barrier to progress.
- 3.11 Although the teachers have a growing understanding of the RNIC, there is still a tangible lack of confidence, often due to the insufficient detail available even at this stage of the implementation process.
- 3.12 There is a need for more guidance on statutory assessment; the revised curriculum was not developed in tandem with the associated assessment arrangements.
- 3.13 The training for the CCEA assessment procedures pertaining to the interactive computerised assessment (InCAS) system is demanding on the teachers' time at a crucial implementation phase of the revised curriculum; the position of the Transfer Test and future assessment arrangements require urgent clarification.
- 3.14 Some schools are experiencing problems and tensions in establishing the correct balance between the specifics of the RNIC while, at the same time, taking into account the vision contained in the 'Big Picture'.
- 3.15 There is an absence of an effective communication strategy to guide schools, principals and teachers, and, in particular, to inform parents about the perceived changes and expectations in relation to the RNIC.

- 3.16 A minority of schools need to make better use of time and resources to provide adequately and to consider and plan more fully for the implementation of the RNIC.
- 3.17 The major challenge for schools is the change implicit in current teaching approaches. CASS need to provide more targeted, school-based support for classroom management skills in order to ensure that the new pedagogies are embedded effectively in classroom practice.
- 3.18 The perceived delay in the formal teaching of reading and the need for more professional development for teachers around this area has been identified by schools as a priority.
- 3.19 A number of Principals raised concerns about the funding arrangements for future development work related to the RNIC and the lack of classroom space.
- 3.20 In small schools, due to the pressure of a wide range of priorities, there are difficulties faced by teaching principals and teachers with composite classes to find sufficient time to work on the implementation of the RNIC.
- 3.21 In a minority of schools, the ineffective deployment of classroom assistants in years 1 and 2 does not contribute to the successful implementation of the RNIC.
- 3.22 The specific context of Irish-medium education (IME) for the development of the RNIC has not been addressed effectively in terms of teaching approaches, assessment and resources. Problems arose as some curriculum resources developed by CCEA were provided in English only, making them much less useful for schools that do not teach through this medium.

## 4. Factors that assist progress in the implementation of the RNIC in **special schools**

- 4.1 There was a positive response from special school principals to the Leading Learning Conferences.
- 4.2 Senior management teams (SMTs) have shown enthusiasm and expertise in fostering a collegial approach by all staff for the preparation and the implementation of the RNIC.
- 4.3 Linking the revision of the curriculum to PRSD, has allowed special schools to take forward aspects of the revised curriculum in a more meaningful way.
- 4.4 Senior management teams provided training for all teachers on the 'Big Picture'. They were proactive in leading the process and in designing their own in-house training.
- 4.5 Through the process of ongoing self-evaluation, the special schools have engaged in discussion and debate about the implications of the RNIC. The use of effective audit of current practice indicated to the teachers the existing strengths in the school's provision.
- 4.6 The lead given within schools by the senior managers is a strength. The CASS support was helpful as a first step, but the school leaders moved the staff forward through the support and training they provided.
- 4.7 The teachers are developing a clear understanding of the 'Big Picture' and the benefits of the proposed skills approach.
- 4.8 The teachers are very positive that the RNIC matches closely the approach taken in special schools and that it will further empower them to meet the individual needs of the pupils.
- 4.9 Assessment for learning has been a particular focus, with the intention of involving the pupils more in the learning process.
- 4.10 Cluster groups, in particular, often organised by the schools themselves, were useful and beneficial.

## 5. Factors hindering progress in the implementation of the RNIC in **special schools**

- 5.1 The lack of targeted support from CASS for special schools has hindered progress.
- 5.2 The special schools report that CASS INSET was variable in quality and relevance. The teachers gained from the year 1 training and relevant resources but less so from the year 5 sessions.
- 5.3 Many of the materials and training for special schools are designed for a mainstream context. The roll-out of the RNIC for years 1 and 5 is not always relevant to their class settings and age groups; this makes it difficult for special schools to choose how to target, resource and develop the teachers.



## 6. Factors that assist progress in the implementation of the RNIC in **post-primary schools**

- 6.1 In the majority of schools visited, a key factor and important pre-requisite facilitating progress is the principal's clear vision for change and the implementation of a manageable in-school strategy for the RNIC.
- 6.2 This is evident in the high level of motivation of the Principal and staff due to their general agreement that the RNIC represents a positive development both in terms of improving the learning experiences of the pupils and restoring the professionalism of teachers. The introduction of the RNIC has provided a useful vehicle to promote improvement in all aspects of school provision.
- 6.3 The degree of commitment and support from principals, SMT and curriculum leaders, who provide effective leadership has helped to build capacity by involving all staff in the implementation process and moving the school forward. A crucial ingredient is the enthusiasm of key members of staff and the promotion of teams comprising practitioners who exert significant informal influence over colleagues.
- 6.4 The majority of schools in the sample visited devised good quality SDPs that are reviewed and updated regularly to take account of the RNIC; they contain suitable action plans to structure the development work of the RNIC. A few schools have begun to re-focus their SDPs to include the RNIC and planning is being reviewed to reflect the proposed changes. In some cases, this work is linked appropriately to PRSD targets.
- 6.5 The strong emphasis given to the whole-school dimension of the RNIC is characterised by the establishment of an effective implementation team, with strong curriculum leaders who represent the whole staff, and with good links into subject departments.
- 6.6 The good two-way communication at all levels with management ensures that staff are well informed and consulted about developments related to the RNIC.

- 6.7 The professional dialogue that has emerged and the collaboration between subject departments is moving the process forward positively, and at a well-judged pace, while giving the more sceptical teachers a chance to air their views.
- 6.8 A well thought out and systematic implementation strategy allows schools to reflect on the way forward, act and plan in a measured manner, rather than rush to premature outcomes.
- 6.9 In schools where there is an ethos of curriculum development, a culture of self-evaluation and the sharing of good practice, and whose core business is a strong focus on raising achievement for learners, the RNIC is a catalyst for embracing important areas related to learning and teaching and addressing standards and outcomes through effective action planning. In some cases, a curriculum audit, using the ETI publication 'Together Towards Improvement', was carried out, in order to identify staff needs, interests and expertise in relation to the implementation of the RNIC.
- 6.10 Several schools that have already been engaged in development work in areas related to the RNIC, such as "Thinking Skills" or "Assessment for Learning" (AfL), are making steady progress at a suitable pace and in small, measured steps.
- 6.11 A few schools have been debating 'skills versus content' in a positive manner, and have carried out an audit of current practice to evaluate learning and teaching, in particular, approaches to independent learning, active learning and group work. In some schools there has been a re-assessment of the contribution of the subject specialist teacher to the overall skills-infused curriculum.
- 6.12 Well-focused in-school staff development is designed to raise staff awareness and to secure genuine engagement. Effective, in-school sessions facilitated the teachers' understanding of the philosophy and practices involved in the RNIC, and helped to gain their commitment to, in particular, the return of more responsibility and ownership of the curriculum to teachers and the belief that change is in the best interests of the pupils.

- 6.13 The majority of teachers have acquired a good awareness of the 'Big Picture'. They engage with the process of the RNIC, accept the changes willingly and move to implement them. There is a growing understanding by staff of the key features of changes regarding learning and teaching and how they affect classroom practice.
- 6.14 There has been good support and effective guidance from the CASS link officers.
- 6.15 The high quality of CASS INSET courses, planned on an inter-board basis, provided a consistent approach to the Areas of Learning through individual subjects and promoted common messages in the interpretation of the 'Big Picture'.

## 7. Factors hindering progress in the implementation of the RNIC in **post-primary schools**

- 7.1 For a significant minority of principals, the Leading Learning Conferences were an ineffective introduction to the RNIC, and did not provide the necessary stimulus for action on the RNIC.
- 7.2 The many demands on school leaders and teachers are deflecting them from maintaining and sustaining the momentum of professional development work related to the RNIC. Many teachers consider that they have faced so many educational changes and that the RNIC is just another.
- 7.3 In an era of unprecedented change, additional challenges and uncertainty in education, characterised by a plethora of high level initiatives, a clearer 'route map' towards the strategic implementation of the RNIC, needs to be drawn.
- 7.4 The lack of universal support from school principals is a deterrent to the effective implementation of the RNIC.
- 7.5 In a significant minority of the schools visited, preparation for the implementation of the RNIC is at a very early stage.
- 7.6 The lack of vision and leadership demonstrated by a significant minority of principals is relegating the RNIC to a low priority status in the SDP, and providing only a superficial, minimalist approach which results in low awareness and involvement amongst the staff.
- 7.7 A small number of Principals were reluctant to take the RNIC sufficiently seriously and, consequently, some curriculum teams are slow to respond to the impending changes. In such instances, the curriculum leaders have not developed as a team, do not hold meetings and are not planning at a strategic level. Little formal time has been designated for this work. There is a clear need for such schools to adopt a more strategic outlook in order to identify important targets and milestones for immediate, short-term planning and implementation.

- 7.8 The curriculum leaders in a few schools do not play a sufficiently strategic role in planning, organising and leading the implementation process in a systematic manner within their schools. There is a need to redefine the roles and responsibilities of the curriculum leaders and to amend the membership of the leadership team to ensure maximum use of available staff expertise.
- 7.9 Insufficient time is dedicated to planning for the RNIC at both a strategic and operational level, given the vast range of other pressing priorities in schools. Schools need to ensure that there is adequate time for departments to map and adjust planning through collaborative discussion.
- 7.10 Many heads of department (HoD) and teachers have been more concerned about revising their schemes of work as opposed to discussing and addressing the changes in pedagogy associated with the RNIC. High levels of negativity and apathy exist among some teachers regarding the prospect of changing their classroom practices. Too little consideration is given to trialling new ways of working, in particular, with regard to whole-school approaches to teaching and learning.
- 7.11 Achieving the commitment and involvement of all staff is both crucial and problematic. In several schools, there is a small core of more sceptical staff, disinterested in becoming engaged in the outworking of the RNIC.
- 7.12 The lack of early availability of support and exemplar materials from the PMB, CCEA and CASS, resulted in a loss of morale amongst teachers.
- 7.13 The ongoing debate amongst teachers about the place of content in the RNIC. A few schools expressed concerns about the perceived loss of content, and, in their opinion, the excessive practice and duplication of skills across subjects. Some teachers view the proposed revisions as leading to a diminution of their subject and think that this will have a negative impact on 'high level' learning. There is also uncertainty about the impact of the RNIC on the structure of subjects and on subject planning at KS3.

- 7.14 There is a perceived lack of clarity regarding how the KS3 programme for the RNIC links and provides progression with current GCSE and KS4 curricular, examination and assessment requirements. This has resulted in uncertainty and an unwillingness to change until the emergence of a more coherent vision.
- 7.15 A few schools report that there are mixed messages from the external sources (CASS, CCEA and the PMB); they report spending an inordinate amount of time trying to get a clearer understanding before they can disseminate to the staff and this leads to delays in development work.
- 7.16 There was insufficient use in some schools of the CASS Link Officer to provide greater challenge and 'critical' advice.
- 7.17 A few schools raised concerns about the financial implications of training, resource needs and the impact on teachers' time.
- 7.18 A major weakness of the support strategy has been the lack of on-line learning to support school and teacher communities of learners, to provide a repository of resources or to share methodologies. Failing to encourage teachers to engage in on-line learning experiences is a serious oversight; it is likely that they will be less inclined to incorporate this model into their teaching methodologies.
- 7.19 The lack of detail and knowledge concerning the assessment arrangements for the RNIC has had a destabilising effect on the system.
- 7.20 According to the schools, the overall quality of the CASS support was variable. It was characterised by a broad brush approach, not tailored to the individual needs of schools. A significant minority of the schools visited reported that INSET was consistently good or contained many good features. A majority of the schools considered INSET to be sound but with important areas for improvement. A few schools reported the need for more subject-focused INSET and for strategies to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

## 8. Recommendations and issues for action

The key changes required to improve the implementation of the RNIC are as follows.

### The Department of Education (DE) should ensure that:

a clear framework for the roll-out of the RNIC is devised and that a programme for its implementation is communicated to the key stakeholders and is adhered to; the articulation of a clearer strategic overview would help school leaders apply greater coherence to the many initiatives in which they have to engage;

a greater number of principals support and take ownership of the RNIC;

opportunities for on-line learning to support school and teacher communities of learners are included in the next stage of the preparation for the RNIC through the effective use of learning environments, such as, for example LearningNI;

the future arrangements for the statutory assessment of the RNIC are clarified as soon as possible;

a more effective communication strategy is implemented to share the arrangements for the RNIC with parents and the wider community;

better cohesion is developed amongst the main stakeholders of CASS, CCEA and RTU; and

the many initiatives in which schools currently are involved are prioritised systematically.

### The Partnership Management Board (PMB) should:

release key documentation, guidance and resources to schools and teachers using a more opportune and advantageous timescale that

would enable teachers to become more familiar with them and adapt them to their own teaching styles;

assist teachers to take greater ownership of the RNIC by addressing more thoroughly the changes in pedagogy associated with the skills-infused curriculum and mediating them more successfully to teachers;

eliminate the confusion surrounding the rationale of the RNIC, the management of the proposed changes to the pedagogy and how they are to be integrated with the "content" or learning areas, in particular, in relation to how children learn;

encourage schools to disseminate 'good practice' in relation to the RNIC in order that their experiences can be shared more widely;

address the specific issues related to small schools, composite classes, teaching principals and IME;

continue to raise the teachers' awareness, knowledge and understanding of the RNIC by providing schools with further practical examples of good practice and more guidance, training and information on the proposed changes to planning and pedagogical approaches, in particular, at KS3, thematic approaches, active learning, the mapping of subjects and working in a cross-curricular manner, formal assessment and assessment for learning;

provide more support for the curriculum leader teams in order to increase their capacity to lead development with greater confidence in their schools;

empower the link officers in their key role of promoting, supporting and facilitating development within schools; and

ensure that opportunities for on-line learning to support school and teacher communities of learners are included in the next stage of the preparation for the RNIC through the effective use of learning environments, such as for example, LearningNI.



## Schools should:

prepare better for the strategic implementation of the RNIC through the process and cycle of self-evaluation, auditing and whole-school planning;

provide adequate time for teachers to reflect on the content of the training and its implications for classroom practice;

offer sufficient opportunities in school for teachers to examine how the proposed curricular changes will affect, influence and impact on the other classes within FS, KS1 and KS2;

make best use of the professional development days ("Baker Days") and the exceptional closure days to examine the implications of the RNIC and to ensure that there is continuity in its implementation;

address more fully the main messages of the RNIC, in particular, what constitutes learning, how pupils learn and which experiences lead to learning; teachers need to engage further in more subject-specific discussion within departments on this area; and

develop a common understanding of the various elements of the RNIC, engage in planning suitable programmes and cross-curricular approaches so that they can implement these with greater confidence and competence.

## 9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The phased implementation of the RNIC spans the period from September 2006 until June 2010. Within this period of time it is expected that schools will adjust to the curricular and assessment changes, including the phasing in of the Entitlement Framework for post-primary schools. They will continue to be supported in this work by a substantial programme of INSET.
- 9.2 With the introduction of the RNIC, schools now have greater flexibility than before in shaping an appropriate programme that will reflect the needs of their pupils. Implementing the minimum requirements of the RNIC in schools in Northern Ireland is a continuous process, and is currently at an early stage. Developing amongst teachers the capacity to change both what is taught and how to teach it is a key challenge for schools and the support services. A degree of strategic thinking to prepare for the full implementation of the RNIC is required by both school and curriculum support leaders.
- 9.3 This report sets out a series of factors that assist with the implementation progress of the RNIC in schools. The key ingredient for achieving success in a quality way is effective leadership and management at all levels within individual schools, coupled with fit for purpose INSET to equip teachers and provide them with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to embrace fully the necessary changes. A majority of schools have embarked upon the broad direction of travel as set out in the revised proposals and they are making discernible progress.
- 9.4 However, in overcoming the barriers to success and in removing the factors that hinder progress, a concerted effort will be required by the main stakeholders in education if the learning experiences of the pupils are to be improved and the standards of achievement are to be raised. Much work remains to be done to resolve the issues highlighted in this report and to maintain the impetus of establishing a curriculum that is suitable for the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

REVISED NORTHERN IRELAND CURRICULUM  
SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE SURVEY

**BELB**

Botanic Primary School, Belfast  
Christian Brothers' School, Belfast  
Victoria College, Belfast  
Wellington College, Belfast  
Wheatfield Primary School, Belfast

**NEELB**

Ballymena Academy  
Eden Primary School, Carrickfergus  
D H Christie Memorial Primary School, Coleraine  
Downshire College, Carrickfergus  
Main Integrated Primary School, Randalstown  
St Mary's Primary School, Portglenone  
St Pius X College, Mahgerafelt

**SEELB**

Dunmurry High School, Belfast  
Killyleagh Primary School, Downpatrick  
Oakwood Integrated Primary School, Belfast  
St Columbanus College, Bangor  
St Mary's Primary School, Dunsford

## SELB

Churchill Primary School, Caledon  
Rathfriland High School, Newry  
Royal School, Dungannon  
St John's Primary School, Gilford  
St John the Baptist & IME Unit, Portadown  
St Patrick's College, Dungannon

## WELB

Bunscoil Cholmcille, Derry  
Holy Cross College, Strabane  
Lisneal College, Derry  
Omagh Integrated Primary School  
Portora Royal School, Enniskillen  
St Mary's Primary School, Maguiresbridge

## SPECIAL

Foyleview Special School, Londonderry  
Rostulla Special School, Newtownabbey



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