

The 2014 national curriculum: What primary school parents need to know

As of September 2014 all maintained schools in England must follow the New National Curriculum. The new curriculum contains the programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects taught from Key Stage 1 up to Key Stage 4 (Key Stage 1 refers to school years Y1 and Y2; Key Stage 2 is years Y3, Y4, Y5 and Y6; Key Stages 3 & 4 are the stages at High School Y7-Y11). The Early Years (Nursery and Reception) have their own curriculum – the Early Years Foundation Stage, an updated version of which was implemented a couple of years ago.

Why the curriculum change?

The main aim is to raise standards, particularly as the government judge the UK to be slipping down international student assessment league tables. The new curriculum is based on what is taught in the world's most successful school systems, including Hong Kong, Singapore and Finland, as well as what was already delivered in the best UK schools (including schools like Waterville). It is designed to produce productive, creative and well educated students. Although the new curriculum is intended to be more challenging, the actual content is greatly reduced compared to the previous curriculum. It focuses on essential core subject knowledge and skills such as British History and computer programming.

Will all primary schools follow the new curriculum from 2014?

All Local Authority schools will have to follow the new curriculum.

What are the main changes?

The table on the below summarises the main changes in the new primary school National Curriculum.

| Subject | What's new? |
|---------|---|
| English | Literacy reverts to being known as English |
| | Stronger emphasis on vocabulary development, grammar, punctuation and spelling (for example, the use of commas and apostrophes will be taught in KS1) |
| | Handwriting – not currently assessed under the national curriculum – is expected to be fluent, legible and speedy |
| Maths | Spoken English has a greater emphasis, with children to be taught debating and presenting skills, as well as reciting poetry from memory |
| | Numeracy changes its name back to Maths |
| | Five-year-olds will be expected to learn to count up to 100 (compared to 20 under the previous curriculum) and learn number bonds to 20 (previously up to 10) |

Simple fractions ($\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$) will be taught from KS1, and by the end of primary school, children should be able to convert decimal fractions to simple fractions (e.g. $0.375 = \frac{3}{8}$) By the age of nine (end of Y4), children will be expected to know times tables up to 12×12 (currently 10×10 by the end of primary school)

Calculators will not be introduced until near the end of KS2, to encourage mental arithmetic and calculators can no longer be used during SATS.

Strong focus on scientific knowledge and language, rather than understanding the nature and methods of science in abstract terms

Science

Evolution will be taught in primary schools for the first time

Non-core subjects like caring for animals will be replaced by topics like the human circulatory system

An increased priority under the new curriculum, with the aim of encouraging children to become the designers and engineers of the future

Design &
Technology

More sophisticated use of design equipment such as electronics and robotics

In KS2, children will learn about how key events and individuals in design and technology have shaped the world

Computing replaces Information and Communication Technology (ICT), with a greater focus on programming rather than on operating programs

ICT
(Now
called
computing)

From age five, children will learn to write and test simple programs, and to organise, store and retrieve data

From seven, they will be taught to understand computer networks, including the internet

Internet safety – currently only taught from 11-16 – will be taught in primary schools (we did this already)

Certain long-standing topics are no longer necessarily covered

KS1 now includes: Concepts of monarchy, parliament, civilisation, democracy and war & peace

History

KS2 now contains: Chronological progression through the history of Britain from early Britons (Stone Age) to 1066

There remains the requirement to teach Ancient Rome & Greece as well as the ability to link to aspects of local history

A modern foreign language or ancient language (Latin or Greek) will be mandatory in KS2 (we already offer this)

Languages

Children will be expected to master basic grammar and accurate pronunciation and to converse, present, read and write in the language

Curriculum overviews and Programmes of study for each year group can be found in the classes tab of our website.

Your child's class teacher will also be happy to answer any queries you may have about the New Curriculum