

2. The school curriculum in England

2.1 Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based¹ and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

All state schools are also required to make provision for a daily act of collective worship and must teach religious education to pupils at every key stage and sex education to pupils in secondary education.

2.2 Maintained schools in England are legally required to follow the statutory National Curriculum which sets out in programmes of study, on the basis of key stages, subject content for core and other foundation subjects that should be taught to all pupils. All schools must publish their school curriculum by subject and academic year online.²

2.3 All schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), drawing on good practice. Schools are also free to include other subjects or topics of their choice in planning and designing their own programme of education.

¹ See Section 78 of the 2002 Education Act: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/section/78> which applies to all maintained schools. Academies are also required to offer a broad and balanced curriculum in accordance with Section 1 of the 2010 Academies Act; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/section/1>

² From September 2012, all schools are required to publish information in relation to each academic year, relating to the content of the school's curriculum for each subject and details about how additional information relating to the curriculum may be obtained: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1124/made>.

3. The National Curriculum in England

Aims

- 3.1 The National Curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the core knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.
- 3.2 The National Curriculum is just one element in the education of every child. There is time and space in the school day and in each week, term and year to range beyond the National Curriculum specifications. The National Curriculum provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons.

Structure

- 3.3 Pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools, including community special schools and foundation special schools, and in voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools must follow the National Curriculum. It is organised on the basis of four key stages³ and twelve subjects, classified in legal terms as 'core' and 'other foundation' subjects.
- 3.4 The Secretary of State for Education is required by legislation to publish programmes of study for each National Curriculum subject, setting out the 'matters, skills and processes' to be taught at each key stage. Schools are free to choose how they organise their school day, as long as the content of National Curriculum programmes of study is taught to all pupils.

³ The Key Stage 2 programmes of study for English, mathematics and science are presented in this document as 'lower' (Years 3 and 4) and 'upper' (Years 5 and 6). This distinction is made as guidance for teachers and is not reflected in legislation. The legal requirement is to cover the content of the programmes of study for Years 3 to 6 by the end of Key Stage 2.

3.5 The proposed structure of the new National Curriculum, in terms of which subjects are compulsory at each key stage, is set out in the table below:

	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Age	5 – 7	7 – 11	11 – 14	14 – 16
Year groups	1 – 2	3 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 11
Core subjects				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other foundation subjects				
Art and design	✓	✓	✓	
Citizenship			✓	✓
Computing ⁴	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and technology	✓	✓	✓	
Foreign languages / modern foreign languages ⁵		✓	✓	
Geography	✓	✓	✓	
History	✓	✓	✓	
Music	✓	✓	✓	
Physical education	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 1 Proposed structure of the new National Curriculum

Key Stage 4 entitlement areas

3.6 The arts (comprising art and design, music, dance, drama and media arts), design and technology, the humanities (comprising geography and history) and modern foreign languages are not compulsory National Curriculum subjects after the age of 14, but all pupils have a statutory entitlement to be able to study a subject in each of those four areas.

⁴ Subject to the outcome of consultation on changing the subject from 'information and communication technology' to 'computing'.

⁵ At Key Stage 2 the subject title is 'foreign languages'; at Key Stage 3 it is 'modern foreign languages'.

3.7 The statutory requirements of the entitlement areas are:

- schools must provide access to a minimum of one course in each of the four entitlement areas
- schools must provide the opportunity for pupils to take a course in all four areas, should they wish to do so
- a course that meets the entitlement requirements must give pupils the opportunity to obtain an approved qualification.

Languages

Purpose of study

Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures. A high-quality languages education should foster pupils' curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world. The teaching should enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to its speakers, both in speech and in writing. It should also provide opportunities for them to communicate for practical purposes, learn new ways of thinking and read great literature in the original language. Language teaching should provide the foundation for learning further languages, equipping pupils to study and work in other countries.

Aims

The National Curriculum for languages aims to ensure that all pupils:

- understand and respond to spoken and written language from a variety of authentic sources
- speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity, finding ways of communicating what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions, and continually improving the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation
- can write at varying length, for different purposes and audiences, using the variety of grammatical structures that they have learnt
- discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing in the language studied.

Attainment targets

By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.

Subject content

Key Stage 2: Foreign languages

Teaching should focus on enabling pupils to make substantial progress in one of the following languages: French, German, Italian, Mandarin, Spanish, Latin or Ancient Greek. The teaching should provide an appropriate balance of spoken and written language and should lay the foundations for further foreign language teaching at Key Stage 3. It should enable pupils to understand and communicate ideas, facts and feelings in speech and writing, focused on familiar and routine matters, using their knowledge of phonology, grammatical structures and vocabulary.

The focus of study in modern languages will be on practical communication, while the focus in Latin or Ancient Greek will be to provide a linguistic foundation for learning modern languages and for reading comprehension. Pupils studying ancient languages may take part in simple oral exchanges, while discussion of what they read will be conducted in English.

Pupils should be taught to:

- listen attentively to spoken language and show understanding by joining in and responding
- explore the patterns and sounds of language through songs and rhymes and link the spelling, sound and meaning of words
- engage in conversations; ask and answer questions; express opinions and respond to those of others; seek clarification and help*
- speak in sentences, using familiar vocabulary, phrases and basic language structures
- develop accurate pronunciation and intonation so that others understand when they are reading aloud or using familiar words and phrases*
- present ideas and information orally to a range of audiences*
- read carefully and show understanding of words, phrases and simple writing
- appreciate stories, songs, poems and rhymes in the language
- broaden their vocabulary and develop their ability to understand new words that are introduced into familiar written material, including through using a dictionary
- write phrases from memory, and adapt these to create new sentences, to express ideas clearly
- describe people, places, things and actions orally* and in writing

- understand basic grammar appropriate to the language being studied, such as (where relevant): feminine, masculine and neuter forms and the conjugation of high-frequency verbs; key features and patterns of the language; how to apply these, for instance, to build sentences; and how these differ from or are similar to English.

The starred (*) content above will not be applicable to ancient languages.

Key Stage 3: Modern foreign languages

Teaching may be of any modern foreign language and should build on the foundations laid at Key Stage 2. It should focus on developing the breadth and depth of pupils' competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing, based on the sound foundation of core grammar and vocabulary. It should enable pupils to understand and communicate personal and factual information that goes beyond their immediate needs and interests, developing and justifying points of view in speech and writing, with increased spontaneity, independence and accuracy. It should provide suitable preparation for further study.

Grammar and vocabulary

Pupils should be taught to:

- identify and use tenses or other structures which convey the present, past, and future as appropriate to the language being studied
- use and manipulate a variety of key grammatical structures and patterns, including voices and moods, as appropriate
- develop and use a wide-ranging and deepening vocabulary that goes beyond their immediate needs and interests, allowing them to give and justify opinions and take part in discussion about wider issues
- use accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Linguistic competence

Pupils should be taught to:

- listen to a variety of forms of spoken language to obtain information and respond appropriately
- transcribe words and short sentences that they hear with increasing accuracy
- initiate and develop conversations, coping with unfamiliar language and unexpected responses, making use of important social conventions such as formal modes of address
- express and develop ideas clearly and with increasing accuracy, both orally and in writing
- speak coherently and confidently, with increasingly accurate pronunciation and intonation
- read and show comprehension of original and adapted materials from a range of different sources, understanding the purpose, important ideas and details, and provide an accurate English translation of short, suitable material
- read literary texts in the language, such as stories, songs, poems and letters, to stimulate ideas, develop creative expression and expand understanding of the language and culture
- write prose using an increasingly wide range of grammar and vocabulary, write creatively to express their own ideas and opinions, and translate short written text accurately into the foreign language.