The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum

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Executive summary

1. Starting with a rationale for the curriculum, this interim report segments the Secretary of State's remit letter into the following five aspects, each of which will be subjected to further analysis and refinement for the final report:

- Curriculum design and content;
- Reading, writing, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT);
- Personal development;
- Transition and progression, including issues around summer-born children; and
- Introducing languages at Key Stage 2[1].

A rationale for the curriculum

2. A rationale for the curriculum, including the aims and values for primary education, is derived from the Children's Plan, which is taken as the platform for the Review. Because it is dynamic, rather than static, the curriculum should be subject to well-managed, periodic review in response to national and global change.

3. Past reviews have been largely re-active, driven by the need to reduce curriculum overload and over-prescription. This should become a pro-active strategy whereby the frameworks supporting children's learning, including both the statutory curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), are reviewed as a whole. This should take place at agreed intervals, rather than as separate phases reviewed out of sequence. So doing would impose a discipline on the process of review, avoid piecemeal change, and afford schools a period of stability in which to achieve agreed curricular goals.

Curriculum design and content

4. A design for the curriculum is proposed, which promotes challenging subject teaching alongside equally challenging cross-curricular studies. Given the excellent examples of both of these approaches observed by the Review, high quality subject teaching must not disappear from primary schools, nor should the benefits to children of well-planned cross-curricular studies. To this end, six areas of learning are proposed to give schools optimum flexibility for planning cross- curricular studies,

1. Key Stage 1 covers ages 5-7, Key Stage 2 covers ages 7-11, Key Stage 3 covers ages 11-14.

and ample opportunities to teach essential content discretely and directly. The Review also considers how far the existing division between 'core' and 'foundation' subjects remains valid in a curriculum geared to providing breadth and balance.

5. The six areas of learning dovetail well with the EYFS framework to ease transition from the foundation stage to Key Stage 1. The proposed six areas of learning are:

- Understanding English, communication and languages;
- Mathematical understanding;
- Scientific and technological understanding;
- Human, social and environmental understanding;
- Understanding physical health and well-being;
- Understanding the arts and design.

6. Securing progress which builds on children's prior learning is a central curricular objective. Because progress is goal related, the goals of learning must be explicit in order to guide planning and teaching, whether cross-curricular or focussed on discrete subject content. The existing National Curriculum 'level descriptors' are being reviewed to make sure that they capture valid knowledge, skills and understanding from which to plan for progression. Expert groups are being consulted on the essential content of the curriculum and progression towards understanding the key ideas for the primary years. These groups include the Royal Society, subject associations and those representing various aspects of personal development.

Reading, writing, numeracy and ICT

7. The Review's remit insists that literacy, numeracy and ICT must be prioritised. Primary schools must make sure that the best professional practice is brought to bear on teaching these essential skills directly, with ample opportunities for children to use and apply them across the curriculum. Discussion of reading, writing and numeracy in primary education often fails to recognise the central importance of developing children's spoken communication. Due attention must be given to the prime skills of speaking and listening as essential in their own right and crucial for learning to read, write, to be numerate and, indeed, to be successful in virtually all of the learning children undertake at school and elsewhere. For the purpose of this report, literacy is taken to encompass speaking, listening, reading and writing.

8. The central importance of speaking, listening, reading and writing is undeniable. However, the concept of literacy has broadened so that the values, for example, of scientific, technological, mathematical and economic 'literacy' are recognised by society and schools to a far greater extent than ever before. The effects of being 'illiterate' in this broader sense are all too obvious and likely to deepen as the world our children inherit depends increasingly upon understanding the language and vocabulary of these domains.

9. Schools should continue to use the support at their disposal to plan and teach literacy and numeracy, such as the National Strategies Primary Framework.

Personal development

10. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places duties on schools to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. In keeping with its remit, the Review is working towards a framework for primary children's personal development that takes account of these duties and builds on existing good practice, such as that stemming from the popular Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme.

11. The SEAL programme is useful but not sufficient to cover all the disparate elements that have been added to the area of personal development as deep societal concerns about such critical matters as drug abuse, obesity, sex and relationship education, violent behaviour, e-safety, financial capability and so forth, press for an educational response in primary schools with children at an ever earlier age. Consideration is being given to the feasibility, and indeed, the wisdom of covering all these aspects in the primary years and the degree to which some aspects might be better placed in Key Stage 3.

Transition and progression, including issues around summer-born children

12. Based on sound research, such as the Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education project (EPPSE), and plans to provide earlier access to nursery provision, the Review proposes a single point of entry to reception class in the September immediately following a child's fourth birthday. This must be subject to informed discussion with parents, particularly in the case of summer-born children and those with special educational needs where ease of school entry may be helped, for example, by a period of part-time attendance. The proposed six areas of learning will also give more flexibility for young children to consolidate their learning from the EYFS. Moreover, the importance of providing rich opportunities for children to learn through play must be fully realised in these arrangements.

13. Though pastoral support is usually good over the transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools, too little regard appears to be paid by many secondary schools to the reliable information on primary children's academic progress that now exists. The Review is engaged in further work exploring how best to strengthen curricular continuity and progression between primary and secondary schools. This is touched on in this report and will be dealt with in greater detail in the final report.

Introducing languages at Key Stage 2

14. The indications are that the principles of the Dearing Review on the teaching of modern languages are widely welcomed in primary schools. The Review has found that many primary schools have already made a good start on introducing one or more modern languages; some have started a modern language in Key Stage 1. The Review will recommend that schools should focus on teaching only one or two languages and, as far as possible, offer those languages which children will be taught in Key Stage 3. This does not preclude schools from providing pupils with experiences in other languages as long as a sustained focus is given to one or two languages to ensure that children are able to achieve progression over four years in line with the expectations of the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages.

Provisional recommendations

The following recommendations should be regarded as provisional, pending further work in the period up to the final report in spring 2009.

The National Curriculum and curriculum review

Recommendation 1: A National Curriculum should be retained as an entitlement for all children.

Recommendation 2: The historically re-active response to curriculum review should become a pro-active strategy whereby the EYFS and the statutory curriculum are reviewed at agreed intervals as a whole, rather than as separate phases reviewed out of sequence. This would impose a discipline on the process of review such that schools could be assured of a period of stability in which to achieve agreed curricular goals.

Curriculum design and content

Recommendation 3: The revised primary curriculum should be underpinned by a statement of aims and values which is fit for all stages of statutory education.

Recommendation 4: Given the excellent examples of both witnessed by the Review, neither discrete subject teaching nor cross-curricular studies must disappear from primary schools. Schools should protect time when learning is best served by teaching subject content discretely and systematically, and give children ample opportunities to use and apply their developing subject knowledge, skills and understanding in cross-curricular studies.

Recommendation 5: The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) should work with relevant leading authorities, such as, subject organisations, the Royal Society, heads and teachers to validate essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes in each of the proposed six areas of learning, and organise them into manageable programmes of learning.

Recommendation 6: For the purposes of planning for continuity and progression, the QCA should investigate whether it would help schools if the new primary curriculum were set out in three, two-year phases.

Literacy, numeracy and ICT

Recommendation 7: Primary schools must continue to give priority to literacy and numeracy, whilst making sure that serious attention is paid to developing spoken language intensively as an attribute in its own right and essential for the development of reading and writing. In so doing, attention should be given to building the vocabulary which is germane to each subject and area of learning, and realising the potential of the visual and performing arts, especially of role play and drama, for young children's language development.

Recommendation 8: The QCA, working with BECTA[2] should:

(i) Review whether aspects of the Key Stage 3 curriculum for ICT would be more appropriately taught in Key Stage 2.

(ii) Make sure that by the end of Key Stage 2, children are able to select and apply ICT to advance their learning across the curriculum.

Personal development

Recommendation 9: To strengthen provision for personal development the QCA, in consultation with representative groups, should:

(i) Build a framework, based on the successful SEAL programme, for the personal skills and attitudes that all children should develop throughout their schooling. The framework should exemplify how these skills and attitudes can be fostered across the curriculum.

(ii) Set out the essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes for personal, social and health education (PSHE) alongside physical education (PE) in an area of learning, provisionally entitled 'Understanding physical health and well-being'.

2. Government agency for ICT.

Transition and progression

Recommendation 10:

(i) Entry into reception class in the September immediately following a child's fourth birthday should become the norm. The Review will explore how this might be achieved without unduly restricting parental choice, for example, by allowing parents to choose a period of part-time attendance.

(ii) The DCSF should provide information for parents and local authorities about the optimum conditions and the benefits to children of entering reception class in the September immediately after their fourth birthday.

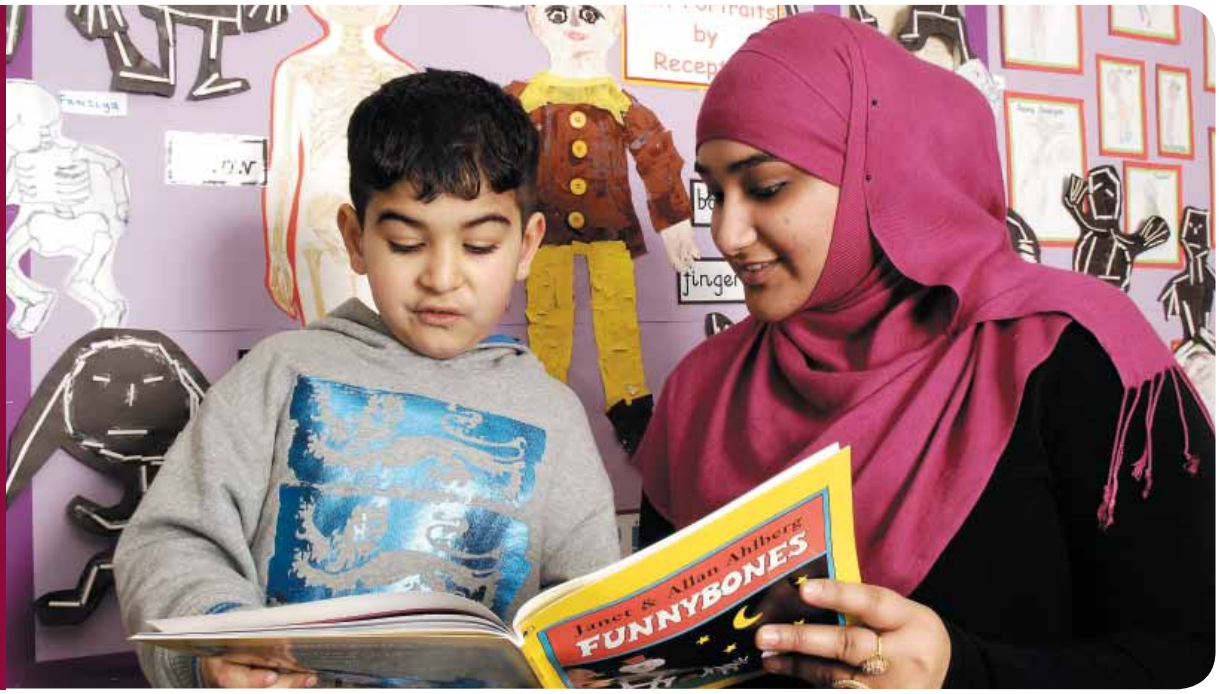
Recommendation 11: The Review will consider how best to support teachers and practitioners to provide effective play-based learning.

Recommendation 12: The QCA and National Strategies should support schools to implement the principles of personalised learning and apply them effectively in practice, for example, so that the benefits of personalised learning in one-to-one teaching, group work and whole class teaching are fully realised.

Recommendation 13: The QCA should make sure that guidance on the revised primary National Curriculum builds on the learning that has taken place in the EYFS and includes advice about how best to support those children who need to continue to work toward the early learning goals.

Recommendation 14: Key Stage 1 teachers should be involved in the moderation of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) assessments within schools, to increase their understanding of the EYFSP and their confidence in the judgements of reception teachers.

Recommendation 15: When the National Strategies next review their materials they should look to further strengthen curricular continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.



Languages
Recommendation 16: The knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes we want children to acquire in languages should be situated within the proposed area of learning entitled 'English, communication and languages'. This will enable teachers and pupils to exploit the links between English and the chosen language(s) and realise the potential, for example, of role play and drama for young children learning a modern language.
Recommendation 17: Schools should focus on teaching only one or two languages. This does not preclude providing pupils with experiences in other languages as learning opportunities arise in cross-curricular studies, as long as sustained learning is secured in one or two languages to ensure that children are able to achieve progression over four years in line with the expectations of the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages.
Recommendation 18: Schools should be free to choose the language(s) that they wish to teach, however, as far as possible the languages offered should be those which children will be taught in Key Stage 3.
Recommendation 19: The commendable work that is taking place to support the delivery of language teaching through workforce development programmes should continue at current levels of funding.
Recommendation 20: A survey by Ofsted of how well schools are managing the introduction of languages as a compulsory subject should take place no later than 2014.

Introduction

15. By definition, an interim report is work in progress rather than the last word on its remit[3]. This report seeks to clarify issues, examine options and set out directions for fulfilling the remit of the Review. The overarching purpose of the Review is to put forward recommendations for what primary children should learn in a curriculum that is as good as we can make it, taking account of what we know about how learning is advanced in our leading edge schools through high quality teaching.

16. Unsurprisingly at this stage, the Review has made more progress on some aspects of its remit than others. For example, the work on modern languages, and transition from the EYFS to Key Stage 1, including provision for summer-born children, is further forward than that on the design of the curriculum, which will be developed intensively, over the coming months, for the final report.

Responding to this report

17. Those who wish to respond to this report are invited to do so, by 28 February 2009, via the Review website www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview, by writing directly to: Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum, 2nd Floor Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT or by emailing primary.curriculum@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.

Timing

18. The final report of the Review is due in spring 2009. A statutory consultation on its recommendations then has to be undertaken by the QCA, followed by revised programmes of study and guidance. Implementation of a revised primary curriculum will begin from September 2011. The first cohort of pupils completing the new primary curriculum (5 to 11) will not do so until 2017, and they will not complete their secondary education, including the new secondary curriculum, until 2024. Many will then look to go into higher education. It is essential therefore that the new primary curriculum is as forward looking as possible.

3. The remit letter is reproduced in full at Annex 2.

Structure

19. This report is set out in two parts. The purpose of Part 1 is to explore a number of important issues, which have surfaced so far and merit further discussion. Part 2 reports provisionally upon the main aspects of the remit letter as defined in the call for evidence[4]:

- Curriculum design and content;
- Reading, writing, numeracy and ICT;
- Personal development;
- Transition and progression, including issues around summer-born children; and
- Introducing languages at Key Stage 2.

Provisional recommendations are set out in both parts of the report.

Evidence gathering

20. A wide range of evidence has been drawn upon to fulfil the remit. For example, information has been taken from the extensive databases of the QCA, Ofsted, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the National Strategies and the DCSF. Views have been sought from a wide range of stakeholders, including teacher unions, professional bodies, specially convened groups of head teachers and teachers, inspectors and advisers, teacher trainers, researchers and subject specialists. Much helpful information has also stemmed from unsolicited contributions from individuals and groups, such as parents and carers.

21. The Review team has visited a number of primary schools to observe the curriculum in action and shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of its design. Account has been taken of variations in factors such as school size, type and location; although outside the control of the school, these factors are known to have a significant influence on the curriculum.

22. Because evidence and views will continue to be sought throughout the Review, all sources of evidence and attributions will be cited in the final report.

4. The Review issued a call for evidence on 26 February, seeking the views of all stakeholders on the main aspects of the Review remit. Over 500 responses were received by the closing date of 30 April.

Part one

The Children's Plan

1.1. The Children's Plan is the platform on which this Review is based. This is because the aims and values for primary education must be seen in the light of the Children's Plan, which places "system reform to achieve world class standards" and closing "the gap in educational attainment for disadvantaged children" at the heart of Government intentions for education.

1.2. The views of respondents strongly supported the vision of the Children's Plan, especially the aim of ensuring all primary children benefit fully from the best curriculum that the nation can provide. In other words, they saw the challenge facing the Review primarily as enhancing the quality of the curriculum and how well it meets the aims and values which the nation determines for the education of all its children. Views on how to achieve this quality, however, were by no means consensual. Primary education is unexceptional in this respect; it is more often a good deal easier to agree the ends than it is to agree the means by which to achieve them.

1.3. While we cannot predict the future, we can safely predict that the world in 2024, when the first cohort of children have gone through the whole of their statutory education under the new primary and secondary curriculum, will be considerably different from how it is today. For example, advances in technology and the internet revolution are driving a pace of change which we could not have imagined when the National Curriculum was introduced twenty years ago.

1.4. Despite these advances, high levels of literacy and numeracy will continue to be fundamental to full participation in learning and life, as will the ability to communicate effectively in spoken English and other languages. It will also be increasingly important that children have the ICT skills which will enable them to apply the technology of the future and meet the challenges of an uncertain world, with confidence and flexibility. A sound grasp of ICT is fundamental to engagement in society, and the foundations for this engagement must be laid in primary schools. Along with literacy and numeracy, the use of technology to develop skills for learning and life should be at the core of the primary curriculum.

1.5. Importantly, too, the curriculum must help children to acquire a range of personal, social and emotional attributes essential to their health and well-being, and to life as a responsible citizen in the 21st century. A central objective of this Review will be to make sure that opportunities for them to do so are ingrained throughout the revised curriculum.

A rationale for the curriculum

Requirements of the remit

"Nothing is more important than the body of essential knowledge, skills and understanding we choose as a nation to pass on to our young people. The primary curriculum must ensure that all pupils can build on their prior learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to develop the essential reading, writing, numeracy and personal skills they need to learn and develop. It must provide all pupils with a broad and balanced entitlement to learning which encourages creativity and inspires in them a commitment to learning that will last a lifetime."

1.6. In this regard the curriculum is a cultural construct derived from what we as a nation value most highly for all our children. For the purposes of this Review, therefore, the curriculum is taken to mean that which our society deems to be the worthwhile knowledge, skills and understanding that primary children should learn at school. If that view is accepted, it follows that social justice requires a National Curriculum as an entitlement for all children. It also follows that an important aim of primary education is to instil a love of learning for its own sake. Developing good attitudes to learning is therefore highlighted in this report.

1.7. Because it is a cultural construct, the school curriculum is dynamic rather than static. Hence the curriculum should be subject to well-managed, periodic change in response to national and global developments that influence how our culture is transmitted, conserved and renewed, for the benefit of all, through the process of education in school and beyond.

1.8. Since its introduction, the National Curriculum has been subject to a number of reviews. However, these reviews have tended to come about, not so much in response to pro-actively managing a dynamic process of curriculum renewal, as reacting to pressure from schools and others who genuinely believe that the curriculum is far too prescriptive and over-demanding in its content, planning and preparation.

1.9. The curriculum is inevitably subject to debate and at risk of overload. Nevertheless, the task for the Review is to establish what is best for the learner rather than arbitrate among parties competing for curriculum time. Failure to protect primary schools from curriculum overload will lead to the superficial treatment of essential content, as they struggle to cope with 'the next new thing' rather than teach worthwhile knowledge, skills and understanding to sufficient depth, and make sure that children value and enjoy their learning.

1.10. Despite claims of overload and over-prescription, the Review has found almost universal support for the continuation of a National Curriculum. Many of those consulted recalled, unfavourably, the time when far too much of the primary curriculum was 'do as you please' and considerably more uneven in breadth, balance and quality than was the case after the introduction of the National Curriculum.

1.11. Thirty years ago, well before the National Curriculum, a major HMI survey of primary education reported: "... individual schools or teachers are making markedly individual decisions about what is to be taught based on their own perceptions and choices or a combination of these. Clearly ways of providing a more consistent coverage for important aspects of the curriculum need to be examined". (Primary Education in England – A survey by HM Inspectors of Schools 1978). HMI further noted that much so-called 'topic' and 'project' work in those days often failed to match children's developing abilities and militated against extending their understanding because it lacked progression and was too repetitive. In looking to provide less prescription, more opportunities for flexibility and encouraging creativity, the Review is certainly not advocating a return to the vagaries of old style topic and project work.

Recommendation 1: A National Curriculum should be retained as an entitlement for all children.

1.12. Each curriculum review has been tasked with reducing prescription and introducing greater flexibility. The fact that the remit letter for this Review requests that: "the content of the programmes of study should be reviewed, reducing prescription where possible" suggests that we have yet to achieve the right balance between central prescription and flexibility for schools to localise at least some of the content of the curriculum.

1.13. One reason for this is that previous curriculum reviews have tended to focus almost exclusively on what might be added to, or removed from, each subject's programme of study; thus debate over subject content is often a contest of strong views about what children should learn, particularly in subjects such as history, and the share of curriculum time that should be given to each subject.

1.14. Most respondents to the Review accept that in order to have a statutory National Curriculum there must be some degree of prescription over what the common entitlement should contain. However, three clear expectations of this Review have been voiced by respondents. First, that it will reduce prescription. Secondly, it will halt the trend of adding new content to the curriculum, no matter how worthy the case may be, unless it can be shown what should make way for it. Thirdly, that it will make curriculum planning more straightforward and manageable.

1.15. Meeting those expectations will require more than tinkering around with the burgeoning amount of teaching content. The demands of society on primary schools have risen and continue to rise but If we are to establish a 'world-class', high quality curriculum we must resist a 'never mind the quality feel the width' mentality, and face the reality of prescribing less, so that teachers can better teach and, above all, so that children can better learn.

1.16. These expectations also reflect the fact that the debate about the National Curriculum has been and continues to be as much about questions on the 'what' and the 'how' of its delivery as about its fundamental rationale, for example:

- How much of the whole curriculum should the National Curriculum take up?
- What knowledge, skills and understanding should be prescribed?
- How can a balance be achieved between teaching single subjects and other valid approaches to the curriculum?
- How detailed should the programmes of study be?
- What can be done to avoid the National Curriculum becoming over full with successive additions reflecting every lobby group's view of what all children should learn?

1.17. Clearly concerns about over-prescription and over-crowded content stem from more than the National Curriculum. For example, as we enter an era of 'personalised' teaching, calling for greater attention to 'Assessment for Learning', more teaching time and more planning time than before has to be devoted to these things if they are to make a positive rather than a cosmetic difference to children's education.

1.18. Regardless of the freedom teachers actually have to exercise professional judgment about how they teach, many believe that the Government, the QCA, Ofsted, and the National Strategies, or a combination of all four, effectively restrict that freedom. In other words, it is the total demand on the school that is at issue rather than the National Curriculum alone.

1.19. Curriculum related activities which remain within the control of schools include:

- Teaching methods and pedagogy;
- Teaching content additional to the statutory curriculum;
- How the curriculum is organised and described, for example, as subjects, topics or themes;
- The distribution of the curriculum across each Key Stage;
- The daily timetable i.e. start and finish times of the day, breaks and lunch times;
- The teaching hours per week (providing that they are at, or above, the recommended minimum);
- The time allocated to each subject and the length of each lesson;
- The organisation of teaching groups e.g. by age, ability or otherwise;
- How the curriculum caters for inclusion and differentiation; and
- Resources for learning.

1.20. The list is not exhaustive but it indicates aspects, which if not well managed by schools, may act as considerable constraints on the curriculum no matter how good the design and the content of it may be.

Assessment and testing

1.21. Although not in its remit, many respondents urged the Review to note what they perceived are serious constraints imposed by the Key Stage 2 tests. There was wide acceptance that schools, like all public services, must be publicly accountable for the quality of their provision and the standards pupils achieve. The picture is a familiar one in that few heads and teachers rejected the principles of good assessment, including an element of testing, at particular staging points. Rather their concerns centred on the way in which the outcomes of tests are reported and the time many felt must be spent preparing children for the conditions of testing thus narrowing the curriculum.

1.22. Assessment is an integral aspect of all teaching and learning; it involves far more than testing. The Government's recent announcement to abolish Key Stage 3 tests and explore the possibilities for improving aspects of assessment in Key Stage 2 is timely and will no doubt take full account of the highly promising work on assessment known as Assessment for Learning (AfL) and incorporating Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP).

1.23. AfL aims to ensure that:

- Every child knows how well they are doing and understands what they need to do to improve and how to get there. They get the support they need to be motivated, independent learners on an ambitious trajectory of improvement;
- Every teacher is equipped to make well-founded judgements about pupils' attainment, understands the concepts and principles of progression, and knows how to use their assessment judgements to forward plan, particularly for pupils who are not fulfilling their potential;
- Every school has in place structured and systematic assessment systems for making regular, and accurate assessments of pupils, and for tracking their progress;
- Every parent and carer knows how well their child is doing, what they need to do to improve, and how they can support the child and their teachers.

1.24. Training for primary schools on APP began in the summer term and they have been starting to work with APP materials since September. It is the major priority of the National Strategies continuing professional development (CPD) programme in 2008-09 and beyond and is integral to the Government's three-year AfL strategy (May 2008). The QCA has now completed the extension of the materials to cover Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics and is developing the approach in primary science during 2008-09. All primary schools will be trying out the approach during this school year; APP should be fully in place across all year groups by the time the new curriculum is implemented in 2011.

1.25. APP should enable:

- Teachers to recognise secure evidence of children's learning in essential areas, such as reading, writing, mathematics (and potentially science);
- Periodic assessments of children's strengths and weaknesses against national standards;
- The use of this information to plan for progression.

1.26. When fully developed APP should reduce teachers' reliance on testing as the main source of evidence for achieving national standards, vastly improve the quality of feedback for children and their parents, and use assessment to focus teaching more aptly on the learning requirements of the child.

1.27. Inspection reports suggest that schools differ markedly in the extent to which they help children apply and refine their reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy skills across the rest of their learning. APP should contribute significantly to a high quality broad and balanced curriculum which provides ample opportunities for these skills, once taught, to flourish in all areas of learning.

Other reviews

1.28. Other reviews which have a bearing on the primary curriculum coincide with this Review. Account will be taken of these reviews[5], especially where they invite attention to be paid by this Review to one or more of their recommendations, such as:

- examining the concept of 'use and application' of mathematics more generally across subjects to assess whether mathematical or other aspects of the curriculum need amendment (Williams Review);
- examining how to strengthen the focus on speech, language and communication in the primary curriculum (Bercow Report); and
- taking account of e-safety issues (Byron Report).

In the coming months, the Review will also be taking into account the work Sir Alasdair MacDonald is undertaking to make PSHE compulsory.

1.29. At the time of writing, a review was also being undertaken by the Parliamentary Select Committee for Children, Schools and Families focussed on questions, such as: 'Do we need a National Curriculum?' As explained above, this independent review accepts as a given, and a necessary good, that there should be a National Curriculum as an entitlement for all children.

5 Notably: the current Primary Review led by Professor Robin Alexander which is considering broader aspects of primary education than is remitted for this review; the Bercow Review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs; the Williams Review of mathematics teaching in early years settings and primary schools, and the Byron Review of children and new technology.

Curricular continuity

1.30. Obviously, the primary curriculum must be at one with its counterparts in the pre- and post-primary phases of education. The EYFS framework and the new secondary curriculum have sought to organise their content so that settings and schools have greater flexibility for responding to children's different but developing abilities and optimising the conditions for teaching and learning. How far similar ways of organising and managing the curriculum are appropriate for the primary years is therefore an important question not only for this Review but also for establishing a high quality, carefully articulated curriculum for the whole of statutory education.

1.31. As discussed below, what some regard as the 'piggy- in- the middle' position of the primary years from age 5 to 11 presents a considerable challenge for curriculum design and choice of content. While primary education must build upon the EYFS and prepare children for education post-11, it is far more than either a post-script to the early years, or a prelude to secondary education.

Recommendation 2: The historically re-active response to curriculum review should become a pro-active strategy whereby the EYFS and the statutory curriculum are reviewed at agreed intervals as a whole, rather than as separate phases reviewed out of sequence. This would impose a discipline on the process of review such that schools could be assured of a period of stability in which to achieve agreed curricular goals.

Aims and values for primary education

1.32. No matter how they are configured, educational aims and values generally recognise two mutually beneficial sets of outcomes: those for the benefit of the individual and those for the benefit of society (personal fulfilment and utilitarian benefits). Aims and values must also inspire confidence that these outcomes are valid not only for the here and now but also for the foreseeable future; hence the constant reminder from respondents to the Review to make sure the primary curriculum is 'fit for the 21st Century'.

1.33. The original National Curriculum and its subsequent revisions have been prefaced by a statement of aims and values. The recently revised secondary curriculum sets out such a statement that is a considerable advance on what has gone before. The three aims of the secondary curriculum are to help all children become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve;
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives; and
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

1.34. Although this Review will continue to test views upon it and comment in the final report, the statement of aims for secondary education compares well its international counterparts and holds good for the primary phase, and indeed for the EYFS. The full secondary statement is set out in Annex 1 for those who may wish to send comments about its suitability not only for the primary phase but for the whole of statutory education.

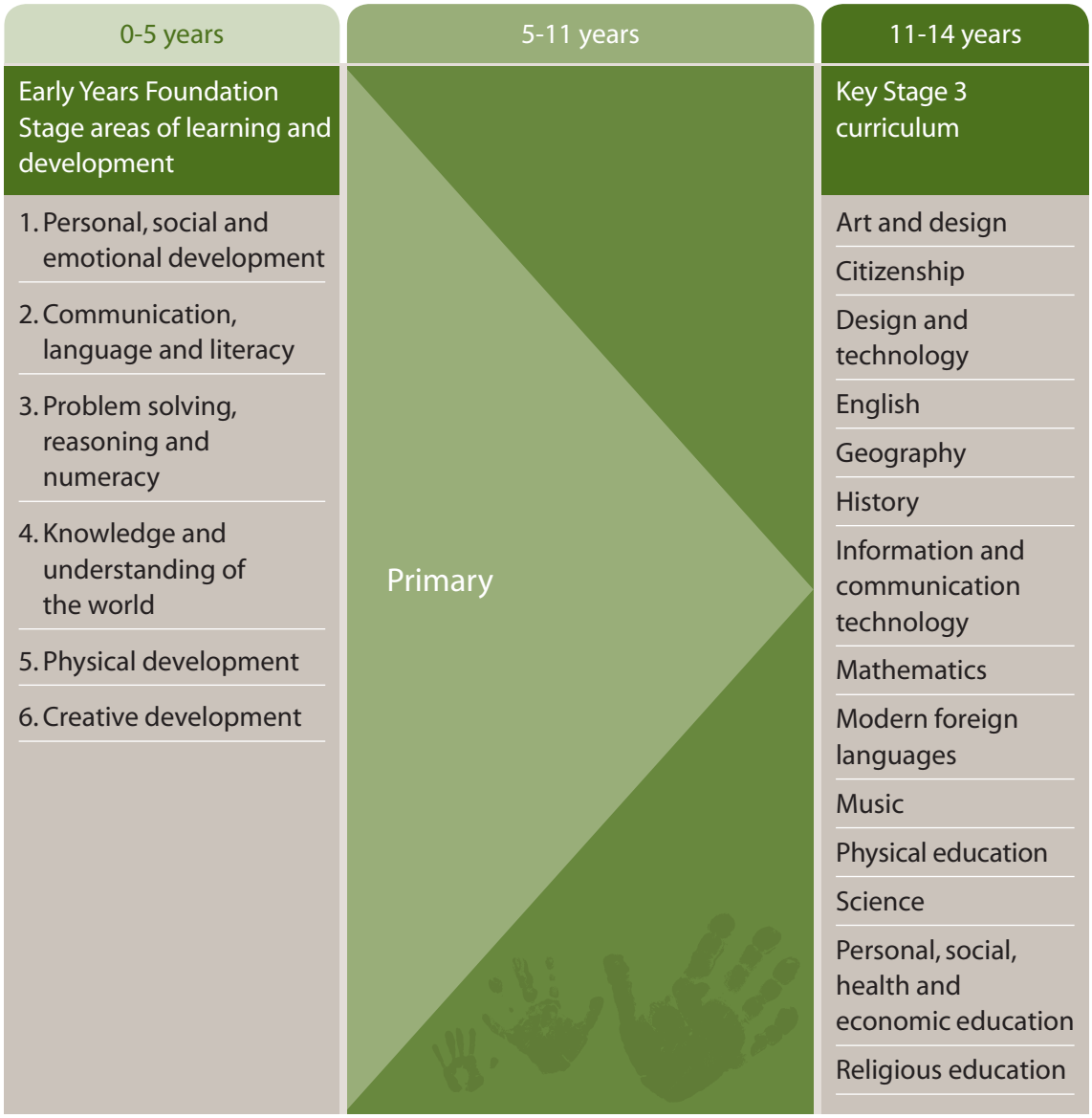
1.35. The remit for the Review notes that "alongside essential knowledge, skills understanding, and attitudes, personal development should be a central aspect of the primary curriculum". It hardly needs to be said that agreed aims and, especially, agreed values are essential for establishing guiding principles, as the remit requires, for 'a more integrated and simpler framework for the personal skills which all pupils should develop through their schooling'.

Recommendation 3: The revised primary curriculum should be underpinned by a statement of aims and values which is fit for all stages of statutory education.

Highly reliable curricular content

1.36. The issue of whether the primary curriculum is best construed as subjects or otherwise has loomed large in the concerns of respondents who have drawn attention to the sharply defined difference between the EYFS areas of learning and the subject structure of Key Stage 3. How best to bridge the distance between the six 'areas of learning and development' in the EYFS and the 14 subjects at the start of secondary education is an issue that must be resolved.

1.37. The existing position is as follows:



1.38. Whether defined as subjects or otherwise, an important objective of the Review must be to make sure that the content of the primary curriculum has high reliability. That is to say, it should make sure that continuity and progression in learning from the age of 5 to 11 are focussed upon worthwhile knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes which are deemed central to a broad and balanced education, and make clear what the contribution of a given subject or cross-curricular study is to the learner and to society.

1.39. In order to validate curricular content the QCA invited subject associations and learned societies to:

- Scrutinise the existing programme of study for their subject, segmenting the task under the headings of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes, and advise on what, if any, changes might be made to update the content;
- Consider whether the content for the subject might be reduced or better sited in another Key Stage;
- Consider how to achieve the flexibility that primary schools say they need to enhance the curriculum by making the best of their local circumstances; and
- Achieve a balanced approach in how the subject is taught.

1.40. In sum, there was considerable agreement among those consulted on the following points:

- The existing structure of knowledge, skills and understanding within the programmes of study holds good for any changes that are likely to be proposed for shaping curricular content whether taught as subjects or otherwise.
- There is a strong case for adding the development of good attitudes to this three-part structure;
- Knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes might be seen as 'organisers' of curricular content that can be interrelated and used to plan valuable cross-curricular study;
- Subject disciplines remain an important but not necessarily exclusive way of organising the content of the primary curriculum; and
- No matter how the curriculum is construed, more and better opportunities should be provided for children to use and apply their learning to enquiry and problem solving for the purpose of increasing their understanding and learning capabilities.

1.41. These perspectives helpfully counter a long-standing, worrying tendency in primary education where discussion about the curriculum is often mired by treating as polar opposites, things which should be complementary and together act to benefit children's learning, for example:

- Subjects vs cross-curricular studies;
- Knowledge vs skills;
- Child initiated learning through play vs teacher directed learning;
- Formal vs informal classroom organisation; and
- Summative vs formative assessment.

The list is not exhaustive.

Subjects or what?

1.42. When the question, 'What subjects do you teach?' is posed in primary schools the answer is sometimes, 'We teach children not subjects'. This is a sentiment rather than an answer, which simply prompts the further question, 'What do you teach children?'

1.43. Genuinely held but widely differing views of subject disciplines highlight the issue to be resolved:

> *"The education system should first and foremost promote the intellectual development of children through the transmission of knowledge, and academic disciplines and school subjects are the best and most coherent organisation of knowledge at present. While we should not a priori discount the possibility of a new and better way of organising knowledge, any changes to the curriculum should be made with the main goal of education in mind." (Civitas, 2007[6])*

> *"The problems of overload, incoherence and irrelevance for many pupils that flow from the subject approach to the curriculum are familiar. A common reaction to this has been to 'negotiate' between the competing demands of subjects, squeeze out a little extra teaching time by looking at subject overlaps and so on. This yields limited solutions, however, and is as likely to intensify territorial clashes as it is to foster trans-disciplinary learning.... there are other difficulties with a subject-based approach. It reflects a particular way of carving up and presenting what is deemed to be important knowledge. In fact, it is only one way of classifying knowledge and owes its current pride of place to tradition rather than to reasoned argument. It draws on patterns of knowledge storage, dissemination and retrieval that are increasingly outmoded. Above all, it is out of line with a modern approach to education and a school system that must educate all pupils, not just those who will go to university." (S. Hegarty, 2008[7])*

1.44. Though opposing in their views, these two positions both seem to regard subjects as vehicles very largely for transmitting knowledge. As argued below, this tends to limit the value of subjects, especially for primary schools, where the best subject teaching brings together worthwhile knowledge, skills and understanding, and builds good attitudes to learning.

1.45. Moreover, the primary curriculum has long included single subject teaching, such as mathematics, music and physical education. As the 1992 Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools discussion paper noted: "...resistance to subjects at the primary stage is no longer tenable. The subject is a necessary feature of the modern primary curriculum". But a modern curriculum must be far more than its individual subject parts; hence the majority of primary schools organise at least some of their work as cross-curricular studies.

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6. Civitas, *The Corruption of the Curriculum* (2007).
7. S. Hegarty, *Schooling in 2025* (2008).

1.46. Although the acquisition of subject knowledge has never been the only component of a good school curriculum, or education, or everything that we want our young people to learn, it is worth noting that, when observed in practice by the Review, the approach which attempts to teach skills as entities disembodied from a coherent core of worthwhile knowledge has not been convincing in securing children's understanding of important key ideas.

1.47. There will be times when it is right to marshal worthwhile content into well-planned, cross-curricular studies. This is not only because it helps children to better understand ideas about such important matters as: sustainable development, financial capability, and health and safety but also because it provides ample opportunity for them to use and apply what they have best learned from discrete teaching, for example, in mathematics, English and ICT.

Recommendation 4: Given the excellent examples of both witnessed by the Review, neither discrete subject teaching nor cross-curricular studies must disappear from primary schools. Schools should protect time when learning is best served by teaching subject content discretely and systematically, and give children ample opportunities to use and apply their developing subject knowledge, skills and understanding in cross-curricular studies.

What is distinctive about children's learning and development in the primary phase?

1.48. Given the strong tradition of 'child-centred' thinking in primary education it is perhaps surprising that many respondents to the Review found it difficult to answer this question in all but general terms. Typical answers included:

- 'It's a time when they learn how to learn';
- 'It's not what they learn but how they learn that's important'; and
- 'Each child is unique so learning has to be personalised'.

1.49. The six years from 5 to 11 are a crucially important phase of children's education. This is not only because these years cover the longest period of statutory education, taking up more than half of children's schooling from 5 to 16, but also because this is when children make enormous advances in their physical, intellectual, emotional and social capabilities.

1.50. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the progress primary children make in becoming literate, with the vast majority moving successfully from 'learning to read to reading to learn' by the age of 7. This is but one of many enormously important accomplishments that children achieve in the primary years. Similar 'tipping points' are reached as children master, for example, key aspects of numeracy, and facility in the performing arts, such as the ability to play a musical instrument. Thus by the end of the primary phase children who have benefited consistently from excellent teaching constantly challenge us to raise our expectations of their capabilities.

1.51. Obviously, the curriculum must be coherent, comprehensible, intellectually challenging and rewarding from the standpoint of children starting out on a lifelong 'learning journey'. Good primary teaching involves far more than waiting for children to develop by following their every whim. Such teaching deliberately deepens and widens children's understanding by firing their imagination and interest in learning and paving the way for further learning. Through 'scaffolding' learning, as envisaged by Vygotsky and advocated by the National Strategies, teachers make possible "what children can do with their support today they can do unaided tomorrow"[8].

8. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (1962) and *Mind in Society: The development of higher sociological processes* (1978).

Matching the organisation and content of the curriculum to children's progress through the primary years

1.52. Designating some subjects as 'core' and others as 'foundation' was an attempt to help schools prioritise curricular content. However, over time, the content of both the core and the foundation has enlarged. Given the totality of demands upon them, it is hardly surprising that most primary schools do not achieve equally high standards of work in all of the statutory subjects and the wider content which constitute their entire curriculum. The majority prioritise around the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and do their best to cover the rest.

1.53. Although these demands are accompanied by a welcome increase in the time allocated to teachers for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA), the reality in most primary schools is that of a class teacher system in which a 'generalist' teacher teaches nearly the entire curriculum to one class for one year. Despite the pressures this appears to place on primary class teachers, the class based organisation is seen as a considerable advantage by some respondents to the Review:

> *"A major strength of primary school organisation is that one teacher spends a majority of each day with the same class – so that aspects that need revising and repeating can be inserted during odd moments[9]."*

1.54. Such advantages, and others described below for personal development, have to be weighed against the demands, especially in Key Stage 2, on generalist primary teachers typically having to cope with the depth of subject knowledge and range of skills sufficient to match children's developing capabilities across the whole curriculum: this is hardly a new issue in primary schools. Any changes proposed to the primary curriculum by the Review are unlikely to substantially reduce these demands on class teachers, making it necessary to seek imaginative ways of providing teaching to the required depth, not least to meet the pace and appetite for learning of the most able children. One highly promising route to meeting the demand for in-depth teaching and learning is undoubtedly emerging through ICT.

1.55. Based on the most effective practice observed and reported, for example, by Ofsted, the Review is working towards getting the best of all approaches to advance children's learning from age 5 to 11. In keeping with its remit, Part 2 considers how this might be achieved first through the design of the curriculum.

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9. Richard Dunne, *Making Maths Make Sense.*

Part two

ASPECT 1 Curriculum design and content

Requirements of the remit

"Your review should consider when and how in primary education children should be introduced to the key ideas and practices of the principal subject areas of learning."

Designing for progression in learning

2.1. The immense importance of securing progress in learning hardly needs to be argued as a key driver of curriculum design. Because progress is goal related designing the curriculum calls for answers to the question: what are the goals to which children should progress? The early and primary years are when children start to acquire the knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes to learning, which are essential if they are to lead fulfilled lives and contribute as responsible citizens.

2.2. For young children, however, this aspiration is realised incrementally, often from very practical, small beginnings which lead to key ideas. Key ideas in science, for example, may start from rich opportunities for playing with sand and water where they will learn to appreciate something of the states in which matter exists.

2.3. Likewise, active engagement with a well-loved story such as 'The Three Little Pigs' can help them to see how the properties of a material determine its use, especially if they have the chance, as in one nursery class, to make and compare model houses of straw, sticks and blocks. Thereby the early years framework provides valuable precursors to key ideas in science and design technology, not to mention the boost which all these experiences give to children's language as they acquire the vocabularies of different subjects and areas of learning.

2.4. That the key ideas and practices of the principal subject areas of learning need to be realised, that is to say, made real for young children as they become increasingly capable of more abstract thinking, is a guiding principle of high quality early years and primary teaching. If they are to plan and teach accordingly, it follows that teachers themselves need to be well aware of the long-term goals, as well as the immediate experiences, opportunities and small steps which children will need to reach them. This aspect of the remit therefore considers how the design of the curriculum will accommodate and promote the increasing capabilities of children as they progress through primary education.

2.5. Responses to the Review to date show, in rank order, the following 'top ten' views of what a re-designed primary curriculum should achieve:

1. At least some aspects of the EYFS should be extended into the primary curriculum.
2. The skills of reading, writing and mathematics should be taught discretely but more attention should be given to using these skills across the curriculum and applying them to real life situations.
3. The degree of prescription and curricular content must be reduced.
4. Sufficient time needs to be found for teaching Personal, Social and Emotional (PSE) capabilities, including building relationships, the skills of team working and conflict resolution.
5. All subjects should be introduced from year 1 (see 10).
6. To improve transfer arrangements for children between the EYFS, primary schools and secondary schools, more opportunities need to be made for staff communication across these transition points.
7. Flexibility to personalise learning to the individual and/or allow more attention to learning that responds to the context of the school.
8. Developing empathy, respect and tolerance should be an essential part of the PSHE curriculum.
9. More opportunities are needed for children to benefit from cross-curricular studies.
10. All subjects should not be introduced from year 1 (in contrast to 5).

The NFER also conducted a survey of teachers' views on aspects of the remit for the Review which showed similar findings.

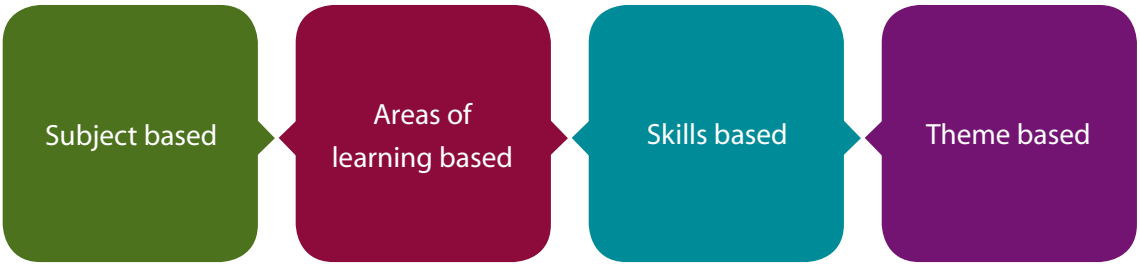
2.6. Consultation over the last few months has found widespread support for a curriculum design that is based on:

- a clear set of culturally derived aims and values;
- explicit opportunities to benefit from subject teaching and cross -curricular studies that represent the principal areas of our national culture and achievement;
- explicit opportunities throughout to develop good attitudes to learning and children's personal development;
- securing high achievement in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and ICT; and
- a set of curriculum design principles that will enable schools to fashion a rich learning environment for their children which will engage, motivate and challenge them.

2.7. These views will be taken into account in final proposals for designing the curriculum. Meanwhile, the Review is exploring approaches to curriculum design which gets the best deal for the learner from dedicated subject teaching and cross-curricular studies.

Approaches to the curriculum

2.8. Four broad approaches to the curriculum are apparent in primary schools: subject based; areas of learning based; skills based; and theme based. International comparisons suggest that countries who have recently reviewed their curricula are increasingly favouring approaches based on broad areas of learning[10].



2.9. Each approach has strengths. However, no single one offers the full range of opportunities that the Review considers sufficient for primary children. Moreover, the highly successful schools visited by the Review do not deploy one approach to the exclusion of all others. Ofsted reports that schools with outstanding curricula provide both skilled subject teaching and opportunities for children to benefit from rich, cross-curricular studies which make connections between subjects and encourage pupils to apply what they have learned in one subject to others, thus reinforcing learning and deepening their understanding.

2.10. While the current framework should not prevent schools from developing a curriculum that makes the best both of subject studies and cross -curricular studies, this is not achieved often enough. Though by no means a universal response, many primary teachers report that they find it well nigh impossible to concentrate thoroughly on literacy and numeracy and deliver all ten statutory subjects of the National Curriculum, plus religious education (RE) and the joint non-statutory, but soon to become statutory, framework for PSHE and citizenship.

2.11. These difficulties are noted in Ofsted's annual reports which repeatedly tell us that teaching, learning and assessment in the foundation subjects are weaker and lag behind standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This is largely because many teachers struggle to cover the full curriculum. The Review is therefore working to propose a framework which will enable schools and teachers to overcome these difficulties.

10. QCA Primary curriculum change: directions of travel in 10 countries since 2005 (2008). The final report will look at how the English primary National Curriculum compares with primary curricula in other countries.

Areas of learning and subject specific teaching

Requirements of the remit

"Your review should examine whether pupils should continue to be introduced to each existing National Curriculum subject from Year 1. I would welcome your advice on whether…pupils' interests might be better served by having fewer subjects during primary education, particularly in Key Stage 1."

2.12. A number of countries present the primary curriculum, at least in part, as areas of learning. There is also a broad international consensus around what constitutes the major areas of learning considered essential for a balanced and well rounded education.

2.13. Some of the advantages of designing the primary curriculum as a planned, carefully constructed amalgam of areas of learning and subjects are that it:

- enables explicit connections to be made between subjects and areas of learning, which may otherwise be overlooked;
- dovetails well with the EYFS to ease transition to primary education for those children, especially the summer-born, who may need longer to consolidate early learning goals;
- deepens children's interests and understanding as they use and apply the knowledge and skills gained in one subject, or area of learning, to another. Obvious examples are that children will deepen their understanding of number, learnt in mathematics, through opportunities to use and apply number knowledge and skills to learning in, say, science and technology. Equally, when taught well, drama is hugely appealing to children in its own right before, throughout and beyond the primary years. However, drama is particularly valuable for primary schools because of the unique contributions it makes to virtually all aspects of children's language development;
- enables a gradual increase in specialist teaching of subjects and other worthwhile content to match children's progress in Key Stage 2;
- offers challenging opportunities for gifted and talented children to fulfil their potential, for example, through extended studies;
- strengthens continuity with Key Stage 3 by focussing upon progress towards key ideas.

2.14. Feedback from consultations to date suggests that a design, such as that proposed below, for six areas of learning underpinned by specific subject teaching, should make it easier for schools to plan the curriculum to achieve greater continuity with the EYFS, and match content and pedagogy to children's different but developing capabilities thereafter.

2.15. It would be disingenuous, however, to merely reconfigure all that is required by the existing curriculum into six areas of learning and present it as having reduced the level of prescription and amount of content. To solve the 'quarts-into- pint-pots' problem faced by primary schools the radical requirement of the Children's Plan for 'a root and branch' review must be taken seriously. This means that the total content simply has to be reduced. One way to achieve this might be to focus planning for progression rigorously on a manageable set of key ideas as outlined below (paragraphs 2.33 and 2.34) in the case of mathematics.

2.16. This does not mean, of course, that whatever is removed is lost for ever. Rather, it may be possible, and well worthwhile, to re-distribute curricular content which is commonly fixed and sometimes repeated in individual 'subject silos' to better effect across areas of learning and Key Stages, including removing from Key Stage 2 content that is repeated in Key Stage 3.

2.17. Under the following proposals, therefore, no key ideas currently brigaded in subjects should be down-graded or lost. The intention is to embed and intensify these ideas to better effect in cross-curricular studies and, where appropriate, provide opportunities to teach them directly as unmissable knowledge and skills. Science and technology, and design technology for example, will be strengthened in their own right and enliven environmental work in human and social studies.

How might areas of learning be construed?

2.18. The Review is exploring a design for planning the primary curriculum organised through six areas of learning as follows:

- Understanding English, communication and languages;
- Mathematical understanding;
- Scientific and technological understanding;
- Human, social and environmental understanding;
- Understanding physical health and well-being;
- Understanding the arts and design.

2.19. This design centres on building understanding incrementally as an outcome of learning worthwhile knowledge and skills that are robustly applied across the curriculum and establishing good attitudes to learning. Although all these attributes are essential, understanding is fore grounded as the crowning attribute derived from the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills.

2.20. The over-arching importance of understanding is well illustrated in the latest Ofsted[11] report on mathematics, which shows, yet again, that children may know and have the skills to do sums but they do not understand what sums to do when faced with a real life mathematical problem; this is often because they have had too few opportunities to use and apply their knowledge and skills.

2.21. The message is similar to that from Ofsted reports on the early learning goals. It is also explicit in the case of children learning to read: children may know how to decode and encode print but must then apply that knowledge and skill to understanding the words on the page because the ultimate and obvious goal of reading is comprehension.

2.22. In this view, too, understanding is provisional and subject to change as new knowledge is won. Our understanding of genetics, for example, has changed markedly from the work on DNA. Moreover, understanding is a matter of degree. For example, the debate about whether science in schools should be for the scientist, as a producer of science, or for the citizen, as a consumer of science, suggests that there will be markedly different degrees of understanding such that the curriculum must accommodate the education both of specialists and non-specialists.

Recommendation 5: The QCA should work with relevant leading authorities, such as, subject organisations, the Royal Society, heads and teachers to validate essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes in each of the proposed six areas of learning, and organise them into manageable programmes of learning.

11 Ofsted, *Mathematics: understanding the score* (2008).

Skills for learning and life

2.23. Within the existing curriculum, subjects are designated as `core' and `foundation'. The core subjects are English, mathematics and science. Under the proposal to organise the curriculum around six broad areas of learning, `core' and `foundation' subjects would no longer apply in the same way but the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that characterise these subjects will still be prioritised.

2.24. The remit letter for the review makes clear that literacy and numeracy must continue to be prioritised. These skills should be secured through rigorous, discrete teaching and used and applied across the curriculum through each area of learning.

2.25. The central importance of literacy, generally understood as the ability to read and write, is undeniable. However, the concept of literacy has broadened so that the values, for example, of scientific, technological, mathematical and economic 'literacy' are recognised by society and schools to a far greater extent than ever before. The effects of being 'illiterate' in this broader sense are all too obvious and likely to deepen as the world our children inherit depends increasingly upon understanding in these domains.

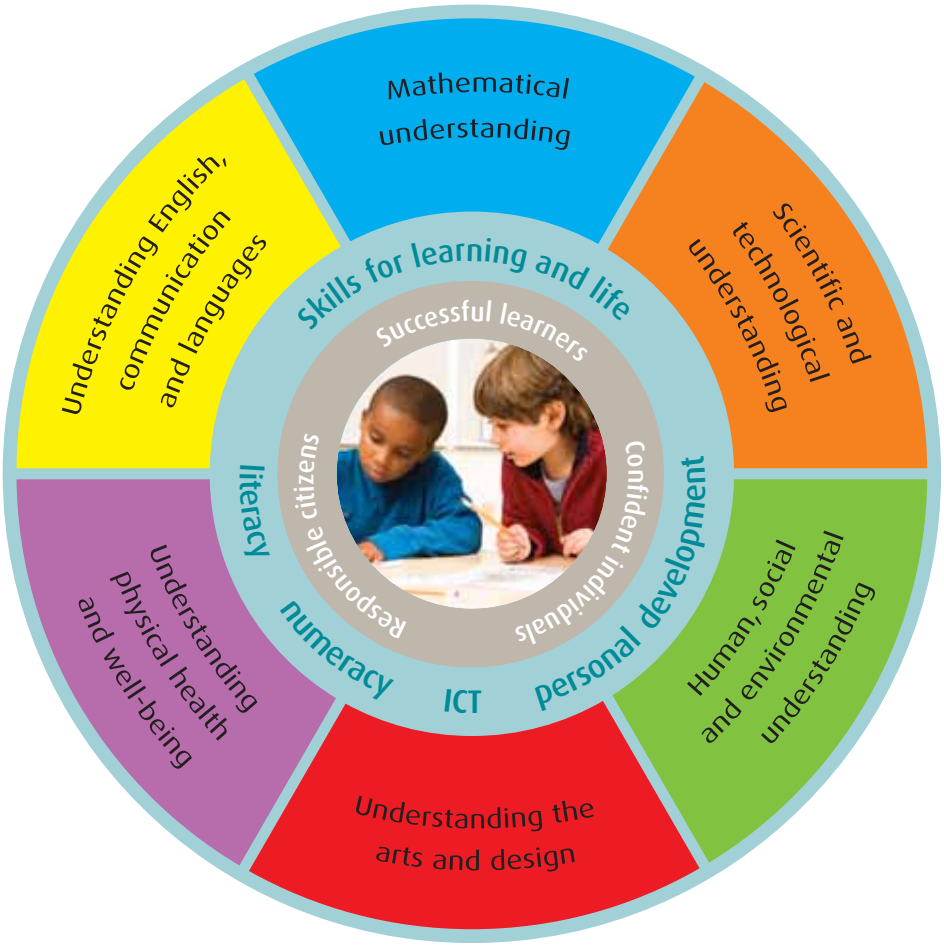
2.26. ICT and personal development are also of crucial importance in the primary years. Along with literacy and numeracy they are the 'skills for learning and life' which should be developed across the curriculum.

2.27. The diagram illustrates how the three curriculum aims, together with literacy, numeracy, ICT and personal development, will be at the heart of the new curriculum and secured through each area of learning (see diagram after paragraph 2.29). In the above diagram, as throughout the whole of this report, literacy is taken to encompass speaking, listening, reading and writing.

How would areas of learning work?

2.28. Each area of learning will be supported by a programme that sets out the essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that we want children to acquire between the ages of 5 and 11. These programmes must be flexible and limit prescription while being sufficiently specific and clear for schools to plan and adapt content to make the best of their own localities without being too parochial.

2.29. The programmes will be structured to enable teachers to see the coherence and consistency that underpin the design of the curriculum. A single approach to describing each area of learning will streamline planning.



Curriculum aims

2.30. Each programme must show, explicitly, how the area of learning helps all children to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve;
- confident individuals who are able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives;
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

Importance statement

2.31. An importance statement will accompany each area of learning. These statements should inspire teachers by giving them a sense of the distinctiveness of the area of learning and its certain benefits for primary children. Teachers are also likely to appreciate that the curriculum will be within national parameters but flexible enough to be adapted to local circumstances, giving schools the flexibility they need to exemplify key ideas from contexts that are familiar to their children while guarding against being too parochial.

2.32. The importance statement should make clear why the area of learning is crucial to a child's development during the primary phase. It should highlight some of the ideas that children will explore through this area of learning.

Key ideas

2.33. Subjects and areas of learning are shaped by the key ideas which are deemed essential to a child's understanding. Progress towards the key ideas should build from the EYFS areas of learning and development, be well-matched to primary children's intellectual development and enable them to move confidently to the secondary curriculum.

2.34. The key ideas must be easily understood by generalist primary teachers. In mathematics, for example, the key ideas put forward and explained in a recent paper[12] by the Royal Society Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME) include:

- Place value and the number system;
- Conservation of number and measures;
- Equivalence Relations;
- Dimensionality.

12. The ACME paper is available on the Review website.

Key processes

2.35. These are the essential processes that children need to make progress in an area of learning. The key processes like the key ideas build on learning in the EYFS. They befit the development of primary children and enable them to progress to the secondary curriculum. Each process involves the development of specific skills to help children gain a better understanding of the key ideas.

Range and content

2.36. The range and content sets out the 'home-base subject matter' with which learners should engage to develop an understanding of the key ideas and learn the key processes. The QCA are investigating whether it would help schools if the programmes of learning were set out in three phases to reflect early, middle and later primary (years 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6).

2.37. In year one, the range and content will highlight the opportunities for child initiated enquiry and exploration. Although the range and content will be defined generically in terms of the area of learning in early primary, in Key Stage 2, it will become increasingly configured as subjects to deepen understanding of key ideas and to ease transition into Key Stage 3.

2.38. To promote flexibility, the range and content will be described in ways that allow for local interpretation rather than long lists that over-prescribe content.

Recommendation 6: For the purposes of planning for continuity and progression, the QCA should investigate whether it would help schools if the new primary curriculum was set out in three, two-year phases.

Curriculum coherence

2.39. This section will identify:

- The significant contributions that content from each area of learning makes to others. These links will be real and substantial, describing, for example, the significant contribution that science and technology make to human, social and environmental understanding, and the contribution to English made by the development of understanding in the arts and design;
- Opportunities to develop essential skills (especially literacy, numeracy and ICT) and attitudes where a real and relevant overlap exists with an area of learning. For example, there are ample opportunities to develop ICT data handling skills in the development of scientific and technological understanding.

2.40. This section will also exemplify typical learning experiences at early, middle and late primary to help teachers plan for progression.

ASPECT 2 Literacy, numeracy and ICT

Requirements of the remit

"A key objective of your review is to enable schools to strengthen their focus on raising standards in reading, writing and numeracy."

2.41. Discussion of reading, writing and numeracy in primary education sometimes fails to recognise the central importance of developing children's spoken communication. The primary skills of speaking and listening are essential in their own right and as a crucial platform for learning to read and write, to be numerate and, indeed, to be successful in virtually all of the learning children undertake at school and elsewhere.

2.42. We have begun to make better progress in this domain through initiatives such as 'Time for Talk' and 'Every Child a Talker'. However, schools would do well to take stock of how effectively they provide opportunities, for example, for children to enlarge their vocabulary, listen attentively, and talk confidently and intensively about their work and experiences across all aspects of the curriculum to a range of audiences. Parents and carers are obvious audiences for children's conversation; they, too, should be made aware of how to fulfil the vital role they play, for example, in making time to talk and to listen to their children.

2.43. Although all subjects have potential for developing spoken language, some are particularly valuable in this respect. The appeal to primary children of high quality role play, and drama in its various forms, is a case in point where speaking and listening and other worthy outcomes can be developed very successfully.

Priorities

2.44. The teacher who once said: "If children leave my school and can't paint that's a pity but if they leave and can't read that's a disaster" was perhaps exaggerating to make a point. The point is nevertheless well made. Primary schools have to set priorities despite the righteousness of arguments for breadth and balance.

2.45. No matter how the curriculum is designed, the vast majority of primary schools rightly acknowledge the need to prioritise key aspects of it. English and mathematics fall within these priorities, not least because they respectively embrace literacy and numeracy; ICT should also be given priority as discussed below. In each case, associated knowledge and skills should be taught both discretely, and applied regularly across the curriculum.

2.46. All four aspects of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing, should be taught regularly and systematically and embedded in each area of learning. Obviously, these four aspects also apply to the teaching of modern foreign languages and should apply to a school's choice of a target language(s).

2.47. That literacy encompasses quintessential knowledge, skills and understanding, which all primary schools must enable children to acquire, is undeniable. Numeracy – a term invented to mirror literacy – merits similar priority. Debate about definitions of numeracy notwithstanding, in keeping with the recommendations of the Williams Review, mathematics should pay particular attention to securing facility with number in the primary years.

2.48. Because ICT has the unique capacity and potential for developing and enlivening all domains of learning, including literacy and numeracy, it should also be taught both discretely to capture its essential knowledge and skills, and through its applications across the whole curriculum to deepen understanding. The Review has conducted a small scale survey the indications from which are that ICT is not yet providing value for money in many schools. As one teacher said, "ICT is not working hard enough to support learning or to help us manage the curriculum". It may be, too, that aspects of the ICT curriculum for Key Stage 3 are well within the capabilities of primary children, such that, by the time they reach Key Stage 3

children should not only be capable of demonstrating the skills of ICT, they should also demonstrate that they can confidently apply those skills to advancing their learning across the curriculum.

2.49. This suggests that the primary and secondary programmes of study for ICT should be scrutinised in order to provide a better fit with children's developing abilities. The Review is working with BECTA to assemble a chapter on ICT for the final report.

Recommendation 7: Primary schools must continue to give priority to literacy and numeracy, whilst making sure that serious attention is paid to developing spoken language intensively as an attribute in its own right and essential for the development of reading and writing. In so doing, attention should be given to building the vocabulary which is germane to each subject and area of learning, and realising the potential of the visual and performing arts, especially of role play and drama, for young children's language development.

Recommendation 8: The QCA working with BECTA should:

(i) Review whether aspects of the Key Stage 3 curriculum for ICT would be more appropriately taught in Key Stage 2.

(ii) Make sure that by the end of Key Stage 2, children are able to select and apply ICT to advance their learning across the curriculum.

ASPECT 3 Personal development

Requirements of the remit

"Alongside essential knowledge, skills and understanding, personal development should be a central aspect of the primary curriculum … Your review of the primary curriculum should consider how to develop a more integrated and simpler framework for the personal skills which all pupils should develop through their schooling."

2.50. In relation to the curriculum, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places duties on schools to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. In the light of this Act, and in recognising that "life is more complex than it ever was" the Children's Plan goes on to say that "schools play a vital role in promoting physical and mental health, and emotional well-being".

2.51. Possibly more than any other aspect of the remit, personal development has been subject to piecemeal treatment. This is borne of disparate elements being added to it as deep societal concerns about such critical matters as drug abuse, obesity, sex and relationships, violent behaviour, 'e-safety', financial capability and so forth, press for an educational response in primary schools with children at an ever earlier age. Sadly, society at large, which looks to schools to address these concerns, does not always live up to and exemplify the standards of behaviour that it expects of its children.

2.52. For young children, of course, the way they are treated and the examples they are set by their peers and by adults are almost certainly the strongest influences on how they will treat others, their environment, and develop respect for themselves.

2.53. Good early years settings and primary schools demonstrate some unique qualities that are not so easily achieved in the secondary phase. These qualities relate to the fact that most benefit from a structure which encourages them to operate effectively as communities of learning, at the levels of the class and of the whole school, in which personal development is nurtured very often through 'actions that speak louder than words'. Most children thereby acquire much of what respondents thought this aspect of the Review should cover, such as:

- teamwork skills and conflict resolution;
- empathy and tolerance;
- respect for others and the environment; and
- self- respect and confidence.

2.54. To make sure that these and other personal qualities are well-supported, however, many primary schools also make good use of guidance such as that of the popular Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme. For the final report, the Review is continuing to consult on these matters, including on how far the SEAL programme might be extended or modified to meet the concerns outlined above.

Recommendation 9: To strengthen provision for personal development the QCA, in consultation with representative groups, should:

(i) Build a framework, based on the successful SEAL programme, for the personal skills and attitudes that all children should develop throughout their schooling. The framework should exemplify how these skills and attitudes can be fostered across the curriculum.

(ii) Set out the essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes for personal, social and health education (PSHE) alongside physical education (PE) in an area of learning, provisionally entitled 'Understanding physical health and well-being'.

ASPECT 4 Arrangements for transitions from the EYFS and through Key Stages 1 to 3

2.55. The Children's Plan established a set of goals to be achieved by 2020. They include:

- enhance children and young people's well-being, particularly at key transition points in their lives;
- prepare every child ready for success in school, with at least 90 per cent developing well across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by age 5;
- prepare every child for secondary school, with at least 90 per cent achieving at or above the expected level in both English and mathematics by age 11.

2.56. For some children, starting or moving school can be more challenging than it is for others. As a result, they may stall or even regress at key transition points. The Review has been asked to consider how to minimise these risks.

Summer-born children

Requirements of the remit

"Entry to primary school can be problematic for summer-born children. For example, summer-born children are up to a year younger than their classmates when they sit tests at the end of each Key Stage. This can affect their performance right through school age up to the age of 16. . . . given the concerns expressed to us by parents I would like you to consider whether it would be appropriate to allow more choice and flexibility in start dates for children entering primary school."

Parental concerns

2.57. The latest a child can start school is at the beginning of the term immediately after their fifth birthday. The vast majority start before they are five, given the current entitlement for all three and four year olds to at least 12.5 hours of free early education a week. The Government is committed to extending this, so that by 2010 all children will be entitled to 15 hours free early education per week.

2.58. The consultation prior to last year's Children's Plan, and the responses to this Review, has found that some parents are concerned about the readiness of their summer-born children to start school and the lack of choice available to them over start dates. Some parents would like their children to enter reception class in the September after their fifth birthday rather than Year 1 of primary schools. Others would prefer their children to enter reception class in the September immediately after their fourth birthday, only to find that some schools will not let them enter until the following January or later.

2.59. Parents also worry that the shift from the play-based environment to a more structured approach to learning in Year 1 of primary school is too abrupt and inappropriate for a child who may have only recently turned five.

2.60. Shortly before the Children's Plan was issued last December, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published research on the impact of children's date of birth on their educational performance. Three sets of concerns arise from this research, which mirrored views received from teachers and parents:

a) 'The education penalty': August born children tend to do less well in national assessments than their autumn born peers. This trend persists across all Key Stages and across all academic assessments. The achievement gap is widest at the start of schooling and, although it narrows over time, for some pupils it is still significant at ages 16 and 18. Summer-born children are also slightly less likely to go to university than children born earlier in the school year (IFS, 2007).

b) Regarded as immature: Summer-born children risk being treated as 'immature' in comparison with their older classmates, giving rise to lack of confidence and self-regard that may limit expectations of them and their expectations of themselves.

c) Engagement: The youngest children may suffer from less free pre-school learning than older children. They may also benefit less from what they do experience because the more mature children tend to dominate learning opportunities and resources.

What does the research tell us about the best time for summer-born children to start school?

2.61. Having attended any early years setting versus none, shows positive benefits for a range of educational outcomes in Year 6. Evidence from the Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) project shows that after the influence of background factors have been taken into account, pre-school (both nursery and reception class) quality and effectiveness remain statistically significant predictors of attainment and social/behavioural outcomes in Year 6, and of progress across Key Stage 2.

2.62. For academic outcomes, particularly mathematics, and for all social/behavioural outcomes, having attended a high quality early years setting is found to be of particular benefit for boys, children with special educational needs (SEN) and disadvantaged children.

2.63. Evidence also suggests that beginning reception class in the September of the academic year in which they turn five can have positive benefits on attainment. The National Strategies CLLD programme analysed the teacher assessments of 35,000 children. The study found significant differences in attainment between authorities with single points of admission to school, with clear benefits where children are admitted to a reception class in the September of the school year in which they turn five, against those who had two or more entry points in the school year.

2.64. In local authorities with a single point of entry to reception class, 64% of children were judged secure at Phase 3 of the DCSF 'Letters and Sounds' programme for beginner readers. In comparison, only 52% of children in local authorities with multiple points of entry were judged secure at Phase 3. In some schools in LAs with multiple points of entry, 100% of autumn born children achieved Phase 3, but this was not the case for their younger classmates.

2.65. Parental concern over when their child starts school is understandable. However, the research evidence shows that in terms of securing the most positive outcomes for children, including the summer-born and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the more high quality pre-schooling (either in nursery or reception class) they receive the better.

2.66. It is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that parents, local authorities and schools are made aware of the benefits to all children, including summer-born, of a single entry point to reception class.

Recommendation 10:

(i) Entry into reception class in the September immediately following a child's fourth birthday should become the norm. The Review will explore how this might be achieved without unduly restricting parental choice, for example, by allowing parents to choose a period of part-time attendance.

(ii) The DCSF should provide information for parents and local authorities about the optimum conditions and the benefits to children of entering reception class in the September immediately after their fourth birthday.

2.67. Summer-born children should also benefit from the proposals set out below concerning transition from EYFS to primary school.

Curriculum continuity from EYFS to primary school: Extending opportunities for play-based and child-initiated learning

Requirements of the remit

"You will also want to consider whether some aspects of the EYFS should be extended into the primary curriculum... including social and emotional areas of development and widening the curriculum opportunities for child-initiated and play-based activity."

2.68. Evidence from Ofsted shows that primary schools are better at managing pastoral aspects of transition than ensuring continuity in curriculum and children's progression in learning. The lack of focus on curriculum continuity and progression may contribute to children's progress stalling or even regressing. For example:

- Progression: Some Year 1 teachers do not make sufficient use of the information that is provided from the reception class, in particular the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. In these cases, teaching is more likely to fail to build effectively on pupils', knowledge, skills and understanding. (Ofsted, 2008).
- Curriculum and pedagogy: As children move from reception to Year 1, they experience a change from the EYFS six areas of learning and development to the twelve statutory subjects of the National Curriculum. With a change in curriculum organisation comes a shift in pedagogical style, from the largely play-based philosophy of the EYFS to the more subject orientated teaching associated with the National Curriculum. For many children the move to a more formal learning environment in Year 1 is a positive one. But for others the evidence suggests that such a positive change is less certain. Teachers report that those most at risk are summer-born children, children that are described as 'less-able', those with SEN and those for whom English is a second language (NFER 2005[13]).

13. NFER, *A Study of the Transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1* (2005).

The importance of play

2.69. For young children the importance of play is rightly emphasised by early years experts and practitioners, drawing on the broad evidence base available in this area. The value of play to children's learning and development should be made explicit in any revisions to the primary curriculum. The organisation for Training, Advancement and Co-operation in Teaching Young Children (TACTYC), for example, have highlighted the following benefits of play:

- Contributes to children's physical and mental health and well-being;
- Helps children to manage risks, safety and hazard;
- Promotes enjoyment and achievement and thus motivates children to persevere in learning;
- Fosters conflict resolution, making good choices and belonging;
- Enables children to develop flexible and creative approaches to learning and problem-solving.

These complement other well documented benefits of play described below.

2.70. The Children's Plan suggests that many children would benefit from a more gradual shift from a play-based, to a more formal classroom based curriculum, to reflect children's individual needs and differing levels of maturity.

2.71. Good `play-based learning' consists of both adult-led activity and child-initiated activity. Good practice does not leave children to do whatever they want. It is practitioners who create the environment, either indoors or outside, to further children's learning through play.

2.72. In terms coined by the EPPSE research, play-based learning emphasises 'sustained shared thinking' (SST), whereby adults and children work together to develop ideas and solve problems: "...an effective pedagogic interaction, where two or more individuals work (often playfully) together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, or extend a narrative". (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2003).

2.73. Both the EPPSE work and the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years project (REPEY) draw attention to the importance of adult interventions in child-initiated play. The research showed that the most effective pre-school settings (in terms of intellectual, social and attitudinal outcomes) were those in which there was a similar ratio of child-initiated activities to adult-led activity.

2.74. Evidence suggests that children would benefit if the Key Stage 1 curriculum, particularly in Year 1, provided more opportunities for exploratory play. At the same time, some children starting primary education will be ready for more formal learning. The Review is not therefore proposing a rigidly uniform approach. Based on their knowledge of the children and information they receive from the EYFS settings teachers are best placed to make professional judgements on the balance to be struck between these pedagogical decisions.

Recommendation 11: The Review will consider how best to support teachers and practitioners to provide effective play-based learning.

Requirements of the remit

"Transition from EYFS to primary school can be difficult for some children. As part of supporting this transition, you may want to consider how the curriculum can support better use of information from their feeder early years settings and reception classes so that they understand their new pupils better and personalise their learning accordingly."

Planning for progression in Year 1

2.75. The national data tells us that more than half of all children moving into Key Stage 1 are still working within the early learning goals. However, few schools have successfully created a curriculum which links the areas of learning found in the Foundation Stage with the related subjects of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 1, which would enable more children to achieve the early learning goals.

2.76. In its report `The Foundation stage 144 settings (HMI 2610) 2007', Ofsted reported that the lack of clear links between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 meant that eight in ten schools in the survey began to introduce the subjects of the National Curriculum at the start of the autumn term, irrespective of the children's prior attainment. Two in three of the schools taught a literacy hour or daily mathematics lesson within a few weeks of the start of the school year.

2.77. The move to six areas of learning should enable schools to plan a curriculum in Year 1 which is more aligned to the six areas of learning and development in the EYFS, while ensuring appropriate attention continues to be paid to developing speaking and listening, early reading, writing, and number work. To achieve this, however, Year 1 teachers will require a sound understanding of the EYFS in order to make the most effective links to the National Curriculum and to enable them to support children that are still working toward the early learning goals.

2.78. Some Year 1 teachers and teaching assistants have overcome the lack of clear links between the two phases by spending time in reception classes to see how they might better build on their work. This helped them to gain greater awareness of the differences and similarities between the two year groups, and adapt their approaches as a result. For example, in many schools work in the autumn term of Year 1 showed more flexibility, including better use of outdoor activities, more attention to pupils' social development and to planning experiences to enable children to boost their speaking and listening skills and concentrate for longer.

Personalised learning

2.79. The growing capabilities of four and five year old children, including the varying degrees of independence and confidence they exhibit, are a good example of why the idea of 'personalised learning' is now more highly valued but should not be interpreted as learning in isolation at any age.

2.80. Although it benefits young children to have space and time to play, investigate and explore alone, they benefit equally from learning together through shared play and planned group work. Learning together is the crucible for language development, learning to cooperate, learning the rules of good behaviour, and much else. The three ways of organising teaching: whole class; group work; and one-to-one teaching, remain valid from the start of the reception year depending on teachers' judgements of how best to foster learning.

2.81. These ways of organising learning were evident in all the good reception classes visited by the Review and greatly helped summer-born children to make a good start to school. Moreover, an obvious element of the good practice observed in reception classes was the simple but important fact that teachers and teaching assistants were fully aware of which children were summer-born. Adults made sure that these children were not elbowed out of rich opportunities for learning or overwhelmed by the older children. For example, time was made for them to learn as a group, with care taken to see that they had ample opportunities for activities, such as outdoor play.

2.82. Given that teaching staff understand its principles and how to apply them effectively in practice, the changes proposed to the primary curriculum by the Review will allow schools greater flexibility and increase the benefits to children of personalised learning.

Recommendation 12: The QCA and National Strategies should support schools to implement the principles of personalised learning and apply them effectively in practice, for example, so that the benefits of personalised learning in one-to-one teaching, group work and whole class teaching are fully realised.

Recommendation 13: The QCA should make sure that guidance on the revised primary National Curriculum builds on the learning that has taken place in the EYFS and includes advice about how best to support those children who need to continue to work toward the early learning goals.

2.83. Further consideration will be given to the feasibility of recommending that EYFS practitioners spend time in Year 1 and Year 1 practitioners spend time in the reception class, to stimulate reflection and discussion about curriculum continuity, pedagogy and assessment in both phases. The Review is also considering where the two early learning goals on literacy should fall between EYFS and Key Stage 1, and will make recommendations in the final report.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

2.84. The major piece of information available to Year 1 teachers about each child is the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). Practitioners are required to complete an EYFSP (previously called the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) for each child in the academic year that they reach the age of 5:

> *"The primary purpose of the EYFS Profile is to provide Year 1 teachers with reliable and accurate information about each child's level of development as they reach the end of the EYFS, enabling the teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet all children's needs." (Early Years Foundation Stage: Profile Handbook).*

2.85. There is no statutory requirement to pass the profile to Year 1, or for Year 1 practitioners to use the information. In fact, Ofsted found that just over half of Year 1 teachers had used the FSP and few had found it particularly helpful. The FSP confused many teachers by including assessments 'beyond the level of the early learning goals', but not linked explicitly to the levels of the National Curriculum. The lack of clear links between the two stages meant that many Year 1 teachers began to introduce the subjects of the National Curriculum at the start of the autumn term, irrespective of the pupils' prior attainment.

Recommendation 14: Key Stage 1 teachers should be involved in the moderation of EYFSP assessments within schools, to increase their understanding of the EYFSP and their confidence in the judgements of reception teachers.

2.86. Further consideration will be given to how the EYFSP should be actively used to inform curriculum planning, as part of the broader discussions about children's individual experiences and needs.

Transferring other information

2.87. In addition to the EYFSP, a wide range of information is often transferred to Year 1 teachers, with a view to informing curriculum continuity and progression. In many schools, Ofsted have found that head teachers may not adequately monitor, and therefore seriously under-estimate, the amount of work involved for staff in gathering the transferred information, or whether the value of it is worthwhile.

2.88. Half of the respondents to a question about transfer and transition in the call for evidence suggested that communication between staff was an important factor in smoothing transfers and transitions. Some of the respondents went further to suggest that dedicated time was needed for discussion between the providers and receivers in order to eradicate unwanted transfer information and concentrate effort on what is important to secure continuity and progression.

2.89. The Review will continue to explore the feasibility of EYFS and Key Stage 1 practitioners having dedicated time to discuss transfer data.

Parents' views and contributions to transition

2.90. Within the final term of the EYFS, providers must give parents and carers:

- A written summary reporting the child's progress against the early learning goals and the assessment scales;
- Where the parent requests it, a copy of the EYFSP;

- Details of the arrangements under which the EYFSP and its results may be discussed between a practitioner and the parent, giving a reasonable opportunity for the parent to discuss the EYFSP and its results with that practitioner.

2.91. Obviously, parents play a crucial role in children's early learning and throughout their education. Their role is particularly important in the early years. They have invaluable information and insights about their children of which teaching staff need to be aware when planning learning.

2.92. Some parents are concerned that when their summer born child does start either reception or Year 1, teaching staff will not have sufficient understanding of their child's experiences and will, therefore, not be able to adequately interpret and respond to children's individual needs.

2.93. In a recent Ofsted survey, only a few parents reported that they received the FSP profile or were invited to discuss their child's progress. The majority of profiles given to parents contained only ticked boxes to illustrate their child's level of development. However, where comments were included on the FSP, they were valued by parents.

2.94. In the coming months the Review will work with the DCSF to consider how opportunities that EYFS practitioners provided for parents to discuss their child's progress can be strengthened.

Primary to secondary transfer: What are the main concerns?

2.95. The issues associated with the transfer to secondary education are somewhat similar to those experienced when children enter primary education. Because children progress at markedly different rates it is crucial for secondary schools to receive reliable and relevant information on their prior learning.

2.96. It is self-evident that secondary teachers need information from primary schools to be able to plan for pupils' progress. Primary schools are statutorily required to transfer pupil attainment levels in English, mathematics and science and secondary schools often request additional information on children. However, some secondary teachers report that the information which they receive from primary teachers is not always an accurate record of a child's attainment. This lack of professional rapport is noted by some primary teachers, who feel that a child's prior learning experiences and attainment are not taken into account, with secondary schools planning for all children at the same baseline level.

Transfer strategies

2.97. Schools and local authorities employ a wide range of transfer strategies, including induction days where children attend the secondary school for a few days in the summer term of Year 6, and 'buddying' schemes where older children befriend and support new entrants to Year 7 and during their first years at secondary school.

2.98. There is little evidence on the comparative effectiveness of these different strategies. When transition works well it is usually the result of schools working in partnership with local authorities, parents and pupils to identify what transfer issues they need to address (National Strategies, 2008).

The National Strategies

2.99. Outside of the National Curriculum, but firmly rooted within the primary curriculum, lie the non-statutory National Strategies frameworks for English and mathematics. Ofsted (2008) has drawn attention to a lack of continuity in their approaches at primary and secondary level. Obviously it is important that the National Strategies exemplify curricular continuity so that transition is seen as a high priority and is supported by the materials and approaches which many teachers use.

Recommendation 15: When the National Strategies next review their materials they should look to further strengthen curricular continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

Better individual records

2.100. Nearly a quarter of respondents to a question on transfer and transition in the call for evidence suggested that children should have better individual records. The Children's Plan states that Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) is to be used universally in schools throughout England. Further consideration will be given to the benefits of transferring APP profiles to secondary schools.

2.101. The Children's Plan further announced the development of a measure of how well social and emotional skills for children and young people are secured. This measure would be used at key transition points, including the transfer from primary to secondary school. The Review will discuss with the DCSF how a better pupil record, including wider achievement in foreign languages, sport and creative activities, alongside English, mathematics and science, could be structured and used to smooth transition from primary to secondary education.

Personal tutors and teaching assistants

2.102. At primary school, most children will have one main class teacher, who knows their strengths and weaknesses across the curriculum. This puts the teacher in a strong position to support a child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs. In these respects children and teachers are often ably supported by teaching assistants.

2.103. The Children's Plan proposed that from 2010, all secondary age pupils will have a personal tutor or learning guide:

> *"The tutor will coordinate support for the child involving the parent throughout their time in the school. They will help with induction, offering an introductory session before the child starts secondary school; agree learning targets term by term; encourage the child's ambitions (academic and otherwise)."*

2.104. During the summer term the personal tutors could also be involved in an induction programme for the children they will tutor during the summer term. This could include working on an extended project across the phases.

2.105. The Review will consider whether it would be beneficial for the personal tutor to meet the child and their Year 6 teacher before transfer in order to develop learning targets for the first term at secondary school.

Extended study

2.106. The Review is considering the value of an extended study that might be completed by children at the end of Year 6. This would be shared with their new secondary school to aid transition. The extended study could be part of the curriculum opportunities in the areas of learning jointly designed by primary and secondary schools working together.

2.107. Further consideration will be given to the idea of extended studies at the end of Year 6. The Review welcomes views on these studies and how they might operate, including views on manageability for the school workforce, bearing in mind the widely varying number of primary schools that may serve a given secondary school.

ASPECT 5 Languages

Requirements of the remit

"In March 2007, my predecessor accepted Lord Dearing's recommendation that we should make languages a compulsory subject at Key Stage 2 the next time we review the primary curriculum. I would therefore like your review to provide me with advice on how best to introduce this. It is important that the introduction to a broad range of subjects, including languages, should be manageable for schools and provide a coherent and progressive learning experience for pupils."

2.108. As a nation, we now have much more linguistic diversity than in the past. In 2007, the percentage of pupils whose first language was known or believed to be other than English was 13.5 percent. Nonetheless, England remains a country where the motivation to learn another language is affected by the position of English as a widely spoken, world language. This makes it even more important that we give all children the chance to learn a language in order to gain insights into their own lives and those of others around the world.

2.109. The Government has accepted the recommendation in Lord Dearing's Languages Review, published on 12 March 2007, "that languages become part of the statutory curriculum for Key Stage 2 in primary schools, when it is next reviewed". When this recommendation was made some 70% of primary schools were already teaching languages or had made plans to do so. The findings from the 2007 survey of Language Learning Provision at Key Stage 2 shows that, by autumn 2007, the proportion of schools teaching languages at Key Stage 2 had increased to 84%.

2.110. It was encouraging to find that of the schools visited by the Review only one was not offering a language within the school curriculum but nevertheless had plans to do so. Languages were often available to pupils through `after school' clubs. During Review visits good examples were also found of early language learning taking place in reception classes and during Key Stage 1.

2.111. The Open University, Southampton University and Canterbury Christ Church University are currently undertaking research for the DCSF (Language Learning at Key Stage 2: A Longitudinal Study). Interim findings from the first year of this three year project, which runs until autumn 2009, were published in June of this year. The interim findings indicate that:

- There is considerable enthusiasm from head teachers, teachers and children in the case study schools for the teaching and learning of primary languages;
- The teaching and learning of primary languages is perceived as beneficial by head teachers and teachers in terms of developing children's cultural understanding, language and literacy skills, and strategies and dispositions for learning generally;
- Children are developing a range of oracy skills in the languages they are learning and the majority enjoy their experience of language learning and teaching.

2.112. This is in line with the responses to the Primary Curriculum Review call for evidence. Of the 395 responses to the languages section of the call for evidence, only 9% felt that languages should not be made statutory at Key Stage 2. Whereas 15% of respondents would like to see languages introduced before Key Stage 2.

Supporting spoken communication and literacy

2.113. Because language is a tool for communication, comprised of reading, writing, speaking and listening, learning a new language enables children to strengthen their first language. Given appropriate opportunities, children make explicit links between the new language that they are learning and English.

2.114. The skills of reading and writing are supported by, and in turn reinforce the development of spoken communication. These skills are likely to take on greater prominence as children relate sounds and letters/characters in the new language and apply this knowledge in their reading and spelling.

Recommendation 16: The knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes we want children to acquire in languages should be situated within the proposed area of learning entitled 'English, communication and languages'. This will enable teachers and pupils to exploit the links between English and the chosen language(s) and realise the potential, for example, of role play and drama for young children learning a modern language.

How should languages be introduced in Key Stage 2?

2.115. An important objective so far has been to encourage individual schools to develop their own programmes of language learning and teaching suited to their own particular circumstances. Despite this lack of prescription three broad routes have emerged which meet the expectations of the primary entitlement:

- A single language over 4 years. In this very straightforward model all strands of the Key Stage 2 Languages Framework are given equal importance, although there is a very clear expectation that children will make significant progress in their ability to communicate in the language;
- A two-language model. Some schools prefer a two-language model. This approach tends to be adopted where local secondary schools offer two languages across their Year 7 intake. Schools adopting this approach also believe that when children learn more than one language rich comparisons can be made between languages;
- A focus on multi-lingual language awareness. Some schools have offered experience of a range of different languages in the initial stages of learning in order to develop language awareness. In this model children often move on from a multilingual language awareness programme to learning a single language in the later years of Key Stage 2.

What do we want children to achieve?

2.116. As a statutory subject of the National Curriculum, it is vital that children are supported to achieve progression in languages across Key Stage 2. The Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages includes a broad summary of expectations after 4 years of primary language learning. It is expected that most children should be able to:

- Listen to and understand the main points and some detail from a short spoken passage;
- Give a presentation in a clear audible voice;
- Converse briefly without prompts;
- Enjoy listening and speaking confidently;
- Read aloud with confidence, enjoyment and expression, in chorus or individually;
- Read and understand the main points and some detail from a short written passage;
- Write several sentences from memory;
- Develop a short text using a model;
- Demonstrate understanding of and respect for cultural diversity; and
- Present information about an aspect of another country.

2.117. These are realistic expectations from four years of languages learning. By the end of Key Stage 2, it is reasonable to expect children to have attained a similar National Curriculum level in languages to that expected in other subjects. It is doubtful that models which give children only a superficial experience of a range of languages will enable them to meet these expectations.

Recommendation 17: Schools should focus on teaching only one or two languages. This does not preclude providing pupils with experiences in other languages as learning opportunities arise in cross-curricular studies, as long as sustained learning is secured in one or two languages to ensure that children are able to achieve progression over four years in line with the expectations of the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages.

Which language?

2.118. The 2007 survey of Language Learning Provision at Key Stage 2 found that the vast majority of schools (89% in 2007[14]) are offering French. Spanish is increasingly popular (23%) and a measurable number of schools offer German (9%). Other languages, including Italian, Chinese, Japanese and Urdu are offered by very small numbers of schools, with a significant amount of language awareness activity relating to 'other' languages. The proportion of schools we visited which were offering Spanish was probably closer to 50%.

14. All data from NFER, *Primary Modern Foreign Languages: survey of implementation of national entitlement to language learning at Key Stage 2* (2008).

2.119. So far the choice of which languages to teach has been left to schools. Although the Languages Review proposed supporting a greater range of languages for Primary Schools, it is doubtful whether this is achievable, given the critical factors of teacher competence, sustainability and transition. However, it would be undesirable if only French and Spanish were offered in Key Stage 2, since this would run counter to the secondary curriculum which has just been made more flexible to allow for a wider range of languages.

Recommendation 18: Schools should be free to choose the language(s) that they wish to teach, however, as far as possible the languages offered should be those which children will be taught in Key Stage 3.

Transition

2.120. Patterns of transfer between primary and secondary schools are complex. This creates significant challenges in achieving continuity and progression in languages, particularly where secondary schools receive pupils from a large range of feeder primary schools.

2.121. A number of primary schools visited had concerns about the transition of language learning to Key Stage 3, such as:

- Secondary schools may not be prepared or able to cope with pupils arriving with 4 years prior learning of languages and would pitch learning at too low a level, or repeat what pupils had already learnt;
- Pupils who, for example, had studied Spanish for 4 years at primary school could be disappointed to find it was not on offer to them in secondary school.

2.122. The recommendation to provide one or two languages would offer more consistency between children's primary school language learning than otherwise, and provide secondary teachers with a clearer picture of children's prior learning and attainment in order to plan for progression. This may reduce though not eradicate the risks of lack of opportunities for children to continue learning the same language at secondary school, and of secondary schools potentially discounting primary children's prior learning.

2.123. Closer collaboration between primary and secondary schools would undoubtedly add value to language learning to the benefit of children and teachers. For example, primary schools would gain a better understanding of language learning at secondary school and vice versa; professional development might be enhanced where secondary specialists are prepared to lead staff training locally to support primary colleagues, and possibly offer some teaching in, say, Key Stage 2. Obviously, these initiatives will be subject to local circumstances, such as, the number of primary schools that feed a given secondary school.

2.124. Further consideration will be given by the Review to encouraging primary and secondary schools partnerships at local levels to strengthen the teaching of languages.

Developing the workforce

2.125. As with other subjects good provision for languages is highly dependent upon the quality of teaching available to the school. Strengthening the language skills of the primary workforce has been the single most important challenge for the National Languages Strategy. Resources, including funding for staff training and development, as well as for teaching materials and local authority support, are seen as essential by head teachers if primary languages are to flourish.

2.126. Obviously, training all primary teachers to a high linguistic level to teach target languages would be prohibitively costly even if teachers were willing to make such a commitment. Nor would relying exclusively on external language experts (secondary or other adults) provide the capacity needed, or play to the strengths of the primary system by embedding languages in the curriculum. The Languages Review therefore proposed a mixed approach in which the primary

class teacher plays a central role, but is supported by secondary schools and their specialist teachers, by teaching assistants, by foreign language assistants with high levels of language competence, and by appropriate resources, including ICT.

2.127. Despite the reservations noted above, enhancing the role of primary class teachers is a consistent preference of schools and head teachers. This is based on the belief that the latent expertise in languages among primary teachers may be greater than anticipated. The original estimate in the National Languages Strategy of 10% with some language competence was revised upwards, after the first year of the Longitudinal Study, to 17%. Empirical evidence suggests that even this is an underestimation. It follows that there is reason for optimism that, given reasonable support, primary teachers will rise to the challenge of introducing languages with characteristic endeavour and goodwill.

Recommendation 19: The commendable work that is taking place to support the delivery of language teaching through workforce development programmes should continue at current levels of funding.

Evaluating the introduction of languages at Key Stage 2

2.128. Languages will become a statutory requirement of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 2 from 2011. In order to fulfil this entitlement schools will be required to progressively introduce languages by year group from September 2011, starting with Year 3.

Recommendation 20: A survey by Ofsted of how well schools are managing the introduction of languages as a compulsory subject should take place no later than 2014.

Next steps

2.129. Between now and the final report the Review will continue to consult on the proposals outlined in this report and those aspects of the remit which are not yet at a stage to make reliable or firm recommendations.

2.130. The QCA will continue to develop the new areas of learning in order to produce draft programmes of learning by 31 December. QCA will carry out informal consultations on the draft programmes of learning early in 2009 in order that final versions for statutory consultation can be included as part of the final report and recommendations next spring.

2.131. Any changes to the National Curriculum which ministers wish to make as a result of the final report of this Review will then be consulted upon by the QCA, as required by section 96 of the Education Act 2002, with a view to the new primary curriculum being introduced into schools from September 2011.

2.132. The QCA is managing the public stakeholder consultation process on behalf of the Review. Between January and March 2009, QCA will be running a number of regional conferences and other events to discuss the proposals in this report; to seek views on the draft programmes of learning; to consider the implications for schools, teachers, parents and children; and to consider the level of support and guidance primary schools will need to successfully introduce the new curriculum into schools from September 2011. Details of these events can be found on the QCA's website www.qca.org.uk

2.133. The new interactive website developed by QCA to support the introduction of the revised secondary curriculum is proving very popular with schools. It contains materials that help schools with curriculum planning and shows how they might exploit the increased flexibilities afforded by the new curriculum. The website includes guidance and tools for curriculum development and design, along with case studies of the curriculum in action. It is envisaged that a similar website will be developed by QCA to support the introduction of a new primary curriculum.

2.134. The Review would welcome views on what support might be required in relation to the new primary curriculum. All views and comments received will help to inform recommendations in the final report about the support and guidance to be provided to schools, teachers and parents.

ANNEX 1

Secondary curriculum aims

The curriculum should enable all young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

Successful learners who…	Confident individuals who…	Responsible citizens who…
• have the essential learning skills of literacy, numbering and information and communication technology • are creative, resourceful and able to identify and solve problems • have enquiring minds and think for themselves to process information, reason, question and evaluate • communicate well in a range of ways • understand how they learn and learn from their mistakes • are able to learn independently and with others • know about big ideas and events that shape our world • enjoy learning and are motivated to achieve the best they can now and in the future.	• have a sense of self-worth and personal identity • relate well to others and form good relationships • are self-aware and deal well with their emotions • have secure values and beliefs and have principles to distinguish right and wrong • become increasingly independent, are able to take the initiative and organise themselves • make healthy lifestyle choices • are physically competent and confident • take managed risks and stay safe • recognise their talents and have ambitions • are willing to try new things and make the most of opportunities • are open to the excitement and inspiration offered by the natural world and human achievements.	• are well prepared for life and work • are enterprising • are able to work cooperatively with others • respect others and act with integrity • understand their own and others' cultures and traditions, within the context of British heritage, and have a strong sense of their own place in the world • appreciate the benefits of diversity • challenge injustice, are committed to human rights and strive to live peaceably with others • sustain and improve the environment, locally and globally • take account of the needs of present and future generations in the choices they make • can change things for the better.

ANNEX 2

Remit letter

Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State

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tel: 0870 0012345 dcsf.ministers@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

Sir Jim Rose

January 2008

Dear Sir Jim

I was delighted that you have agreed to lead an independent review of the primary curriculum. As the Children's Plan makes clear, this will be the most fundamental review of the primary curriculum for a decade. A strong, coherent curriculum which has flexibility to personalise teaching and learning is crucial to driving up standards further. It is central to achieving the ambitions we have set out in the Children's Plan and to delivering the outcomes of the Every Child Matters Agenda.

Nothing is more important than the body of essential knowledge, skills and understanding we choose as a nation to pass on to our young people. The primary curriculum must ensure that all pupils can build on their prior learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to develop the essential reading, writing, numeracy and personal skills they need in order to learn and develop. It must provide all pupils with a broad and balanced entitlement to learning which encourages creativity and inspires in them a commitment to learning that will last a lifetime. The primary curriculum should also facilitate a smooth transition for young people from primary to secondary school.

While most primary schools are providing their pupils with an inspiring and engaging curriculum, some tell us that the number of subjects and the amount of prescription in some of the current programmes of study restricts their flexibility. This can particularly affect those pupils who are struggling to keep up or those who require more challenging tasks.

Building on the steady rise in primary school results in recent years, I would like your review of the primary curriculum to enable schools to have even greater flexibility to meet pupils' individual needs and strengths, including those with special educational needs, in order to further help them narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The content of existing programmes of study should be reviewed, reducing prescription where possible. A key objective of your review is to enable schools to strengthen their focus on raising standards in reading, writing and numeracy.

department for
children, schools and families

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

I also want pupils to be introduced to a broad range of subjects in primary school, including languages. In March 2007 my predecessor accepted Lord Dearing's recommendation that we should make languages a compulsory subject at Key Stage 2 the next time we review the primary curriculum. I would therefore like your review to provide me with advice on how best to introduce this. It is important that the introduction to a broad range of subjects, including languages, should be manageable for schools and provide a coherent and progressive learning experience for pupils.

Alongside essential knowledge, skills and understanding, personal development should be a central aspect of the primary curriculum. One of the messages from the Time to Talk consultation was that we should be concerned with development of the whole child as well as their level of attainment. Personal, social and emotional capabilities are closely related to educational attainment, success in the labour market and to children's wellbeing. Your review of the primary curriculum should consider how to develop a more integrated and simpler framework for the personal skills which all pupils should develop through their schooling. As you take this area of work forward we will want to ensure that it is consistent with our separate work to consider how we might provide a record of children's progress as they move through primary education and beyond.

Getting the content of the National Curriculum right presents difficult choices and balances. Your review should consider when and how in primary education children should be introduced to the key ideas and practice of the other principal subject areas of learning – the creative arts; the humanities; PE and sport – as a preparation for further learning at the secondary stage. Your review should examine whether pupils should continue to be introduced to each existing National Curriculum subject from Year 1. I would welcome your advice on whether, in order to provide greater continuity from the EYFS, pupils' interests might be better served by studying fewer subjects during primary education, particularly in Key Stage 1. You will also want to consider whether some aspects of the EYFS should be extended into the primary curriculum. This might include, for example, placing emphasis on the full range of areas of learning and development contained in the EYFS, including social and emotional areas of development, and widening the curriculum opportunities for child initiated and play-based activity.

Transition from EYFS to primary school can be difficult for some children. As part of supporting this transition, you may want to consider how the curriculum can support better use of information from their feeder early years settings and reception classes so that they understand their new pupils better and personalise their learning accordingly.

Entry to primary school can be problematic for summer-born children. For example, summer-born children are up to a year younger than their classmates when they sit tests at the end of each Key Stage. This can affect their performance right through school age up to the age of 16. I would like your review to give particular consideration to how we can design the

curriculum to improve outcomes for summer-born children. In the Children's Plan consultation some parents indicated that they would like greater flexibility over when their children can start primary school – for example having the choice to start in September, January or a whole year later. The latest children in England can start primary school is at the beginning of the term immediately after their fifth birthday and we do not plan to change this. But given the concerns expressed to us by parents I would like you to consider whether it would be appropriate to allow more choice and flexibility in start dates for children entering primary school.

The transition from primary to secondary education can also be a difficult one for some pupils, and I would like you to consider how reform of the primary curriculum might help to smooth this transition. Your review should build on developments in the new secondary curriculum and examine what information should be passed between primary and secondary schools. You will also want to discuss with Ofsted ways in which the accountability framework might be used to encourage both primary and secondary schools to renew their efforts in this area.

Your review is focused on the curriculum and is not considering changes to the current assessment and testing regime. However, as your review of the primary curriculum progresses you will need to take account of the Making Good Progress work and the development of Single Level Tests.

I should be grateful if you could provide advice by 15 February on the prioritisation, sequencing and timescales of the work in this letter. I would like you to provide me with an interim report on your review by 31 October 2008 followed by final advice and revised programmes of study at the end of March 2009.

Throughout your review you will be closely supported by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) who will take the leading role in providing the evidence required for the review and who will manage the associated consultations. The QCA are also helping to staff your review secretariat alongside my officials.

I should be grateful if you could provide me, Jim Knight and Beverley Hughes with regular updates as your review progresses.

I am copying this letter to Sir Anthony Greener and Ken Boston.

Yours sincerely

ED BALLS MP

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http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk

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