



Rewarding Learning

The Revised NI Curriculum **Planning for Implementation**



Briefing Sheets & Critical Questions

The Revised Curriculum

Planning for Implementation

Briefing Sheets & Critical Questions

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Introduction

September 2007 marks the beginning of the official change over to a revised curriculum that is less prescriptive, offers more freedom for schools and helps pupils develop the skills they need for life and work in the 21st century.

This DVD provides an overview of what the revised curriculum entails for both primary and post-primary schools and how any changes will be rolled-out. Teachers and principals, who have trialled aspects of the revised curriculum, describe how they managed the implementation in their own schools and the positive effect the changes have had on staff and pupils.

The purpose of this accompanying booklet is to help school leadership teams make the best use of the DVD in their schools.

The booklet consists of 4 double page spreads on:

- 1 Key features of the revised curriculum,
2. Personal Development / Learning for Life and Work,
3. Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities,
4. Assessment for Learning.

Each section has a briefing sheet with key messages and a series of questions to prompt staff debate and discussion. You can access A4 versions of these briefing sheets in PDF format at www.ccea.org.uk.

It is recommended that the relevant sections of the DVD are played and paused with adequate time being given over to staff discussion on each of these four sections.

Specific training programmes and materials will be available for the three areas of Personal Development/Learning for Life and Work, Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and Assessment for Learning. It is important that school leadership teams and classroom teachers have an overview of what these “new” areas are about and the implications for schools and classrooms before they attend or access the training.

Revised Curriculum: Key Features

Flexibility

- Minimum requirements... and beyond?
- Breadth and balance.
- Regular review to meet *changing* needs of a school's intake.

Connected Learning

- Connecting new learning to learners' prior experience.
- Making explicit meaningful relationships between knowledge and skills in different contexts.
- Encouraging the transfer of knowledge and skills across different contexts.

Active Learning

- Seeing learning as something that learners do, not something that teachers give them.
- Developing a climate of enquiry and learning in every classroom.
- Promoting independence and self-regulation in learners, to actively manage their own learning.
- Promoting creativity, enjoyment and self-fulfilment as attributes of learning.

Integrated Assessment

- Seeing assessment as being *built into* the learning process, not *bolted on*.
- Embedding assessment in the learning opportunities planned for pupils, in which they have a collaborative role.
- Planning assessments which reflect achievements and targets across a *number of* areas of learning/subject strands.

Skills Development

- Infusing Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities both within and beyond the school curriculum.
- Making Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities *visible* and *explicit* to learners.
- Planning for progression in whole curriculum skills, eg, Communication, ICT and Using Mathematics.

Matching Learning to the Learner

- Planning which accommodates a range of learning needs and styles.
- Considering issues of *progression, pace, form* and *variety* in learning opportunities.
- Promoting *self-awareness* in learners of their *learning*, as opposed to their performance only.

Personal Development/Learning for Life and Work

- Recognising the principle that holistic development is a basic entitlement of everyone in school.
- Developing self-esteem and confidence to enable people to be effective, active members of a rapidly changing society.
- Encouraging respect for others and the environment in which they live.

Prompts for Staff Discussion: Critical Questions

Consider each of the 'Key Features' opposite.

For each one, select a set of questions from those provided below, amending and adding as required to fit the current and future context of your school, and use these to prompt discussion.

What do you understand by the term?

Why is it important?

How is it important to your school?

What kind of curriculum would best meet the needs and interests of your learners?

What could it mean for your pupils?

What could it mean for specific areas of learning?

In what ways does the revised curriculum facilitate these aspirations?

What are the implications for particular key stages?

How does existing practice in your school complement these needs?

What new arrangements (policy, procedures, classroom approaches, management approaches) need to be considered?

Briefing Sheet: Personal Development (PD)/Learning for Life and Work (LLW)

<p style="text-align: center;">Key Concepts and Messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD/LLW is now a discrete learning area in the revised curriculum. It seeks to enable pupils to develop their potential in all aspects of their lives. • PD/LLW reflects and contributes to the whole school ethos. It is central to the whole curriculum and should be consistent with the school's pastoral care provision. • PD/LLW is about values, attitudes, skills, the holistic development of the individual and not just its knowledge content. • PD/LLW is most effective when there are genuine relationships within the school community. • PD/LLW helps young people to achieve their potential and to make informed choices and decisions throughout their lives.
<p style="text-align: center;">Key Classroom Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD/LLW involves on-going and sustained learning and teaching. One-off sessions are neither sufficient nor effective. • PD/LLW works best with participative active learning. • Learning should be emotionally arousing and engaging. • Conditions within the school and classroom that promote PD/LLW include security, trust, respect, a culture that values curiosity, creativity and enquiry.
<p style="text-align: center;">Key Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To become confident, interdependent and participative citizens, making informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives. • To develop internal resilience and a positive disposition to meet life's challenges. • To develop the skills that can be employed and transferred across a range of contexts.
<p style="text-align: center;">Implications for Leadership and Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give PD/LLW the priority it needs within the curriculum, ie, making it central as opposed to peripheral. • To establish a common vision of PD/LLW throughout the staff. • To address the issues of confidence and competence amongst staff. This may require employment / redeployment of appropriate staff. • To audit and evaluate the school ethos and policies to ensure that PD/LLW is consistently reflected throughout the school community. • To monitor and evaluate the school's provision for PD/LLW. • To link and amplify PD/LLW within and across all Learning Areas/subject strands.

Prompts for Staff Discussion: Critical Questions

<p>Key Concepts and Messages</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does individual potential mean? 2. What is a school's role in developing individuals' potential? 3. In what ways can relationships between teachers and pupils support academic development? 4. How does a school translate its ethos from an aspiration to a reality?
<p>Key Classroom Strategies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What type of classroom environment best supports and facilitates PD/LLW? 2. How do you develop the necessary conditions for PD/LLW within a school/classroom setting? 3. Active learning changes the power dynamics within the classroom. Agree or disagree?
<p>Key Outcomes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can a school/teacher produce evidence of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pupils who make informed and responsible choices? b. Pupils who are resilient to life's challenges? c. Pupils who can transfer their skills?
<p>Implications for Leadership and Management</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where does PD/LLW sit as a priority in your school? 2. What training implications does the implementation of PD/LLW create for your school as a whole and/or specified members of staff? 3. What needs to happen in your school to ensure that PD/LLW is alive in every subject area?

Briefing Sheet: Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities

<p>Key Concepts and Messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing <i>how</i> to learn is as important as knowing <i>what</i> to learn. Developing Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities enable learners to “learn how to learn.” • The Framework promotes the infusion of critical and creative thinking skills and personal and inter-personal skills throughout the curriculum. • The explicit development of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities promotes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The active engagement of pupils in their own learning; - A deeper understanding of content and context; - The habits and dispositions of effective learners; - Greater independence for learners; - The transfer of skills and capabilities to other contexts.
<p>Key Classroom Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of open-ended activities and challenges enabling learners to, for example, respond creatively, construct their own meaning, and offer reasoned decisions and solutions. • More time for learners to think. • Effective questioning strategies that go beyond checking knowledge and understanding. • Sharing a language for talking about thinking and being reflective about learning. • Meaningful and challenging opportunities for pupils to work and collaborate with others. • Opportunities for pupils to be more self-directed in their learning, by planning, managing and monitoring their progress. • Making connections across contexts.
<p>Key Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More active engagement in the learning process. • Deeper understanding and the ability to cope with new challenges. • Improved learning across and beyond the curriculum. • Improved ability to learn through collaboration. • Improved ability to work more independently. • Greater self-regulation of learning.
<p>Implications for Leadership and Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shift in emphasis towards a more learner-centred and skills-based curriculum. • A need to review current practice to identify opportunities to develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. • A need to ensure that assessment opportunities incorporate Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. • Sharing good practice through action research, peer coaching and monitoring, reflective partnerships etc. • Addressing practical implications for schools and classrooms, for example, timetabling, room layout etc.

Prompts for Staff Discussion: Critical Questions

<p>Key Concepts and Messages</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do we mean by 'learning how to learn'? 2. Can we imagine what the benefits would be – for pupils, for teachers? 3. Can we identify likely barriers or difficulties?
<p>Key Classroom Strategies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent do we use one or two of these classroom strategies very well? 2. Looking at the list, what are the gaps in our classroom practice? 3. In your experience, what other strategies make for good quality learning? 4. What are the likely difficulties in managing a thinking classroom?
<p>Key Outcomes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent does our current practice produce these key outcomes for all pupils? 2. What other outcomes are important for your group of learners?
<p>Implications for Leadership and Management</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the beliefs about learning in our school? 2. How is good practice shared in our school?

Briefing Sheet: Assessment for Learning

<p>Key Concepts and Messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment for Learning is built on the <i>constructivist</i> theory of learning. • Learning is seen as an <i>activity</i>, not just a <i>product</i>. • Pupils are actively involved in their own learning. • Pupils construct their own understanding. • Learners take responsibility for their own learning, and eventually for their own assessment too. • Make learning and assessment transparent. Learning intentions and success criteria are shared with learners. • Make learning transferable.
<p>Key Classroom Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Big Picture’ strategies – enabling learners to see the breadth, depth and connections in their learning. • Sharing learning intentions and success criteria. • Using questioning strategies that enhance participation and deepen learning. • Formative feedback – telling learners where they have been successful, where they should focus and providing them with the time and support to make improvements. • Self-evaluation, as well as peer and self-assessment, where emphasis is not just on <i>what</i> they have learnt, but <i>how</i>.
<p>Key Outcomes</p>	<p>Research indicates key outcomes of assessment for learning practice to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced performance, especially those in lower ability groups. • Enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence leading to more risk-taking behaviour especially with new learning opportunities. • Greater resilience displayed by learners when they meet difficulties. • Increased independence for learners. • Greater teacher awareness of the needs of learners and the learning they are meant to gain from activities. • A community of learners, built through positive changes in the classroom climate.
<p>Implications for Leadership and Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need to revisit and challenge the school’s vision statements – what does the school seek to achieve for its learners? • A need for discussion on beliefs about learning and how this affects the organisation of teaching and learning activities. • To ensure that pupils’ learning experiences are consistent with the school’s aims. • To balance summative and formative assessment and understand the role of both, separately and relatively. • To help parents understand the developments in assessment, especially in relation to the feedback we provide to learners.

Prompts for Staff Discussion: Critical Questions

Key Concepts and Messages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do we <i>believe</i> about the ways in which pupils learn? 2. In what ways can assessment best serve pupils' learning? 3. What are the benefits and problems of pupils taking increased responsibility for their learning? 4. What exactly do we mean by '<i>transferable</i>' learning?
Key Classroom Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How important is it for pupils to get a big picture view of new learning? 2. What strategies do we currently use to help set pupils up for new learning? 3. To what extent do we use these strategies in our current practice? What are the benefits and practical issues relating to the practice? 4. Of the strategies listed, which ones do we need to focus on for development, and what <i>immediate steps</i> do we need to take?
Key Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the most pressing <i>needs</i> of our pupils? How do these compare with the outcomes cited for Assessment for Learning practice?
Implications for Leadership and Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is our school seeking to achieve for its learners? 2. Do we seek a core of similar outcomes? 3. How does our present assessment practice help fulfil these aims? To what extent does it need to change to better fulfil them? 4. Do we need to review our summative assessment procedures? How can our summative data be used <i>formatively</i>? 5. How can parents be best informed to aid their understanding of our assessment practices?

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