



**ADVICE TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION ON THE FORM  
AND CONTENT OF THE STATUTORY CURRICULUM AT KEY  
STAGE 4**

April 2003

## FORM AND CONTENT OF THE KEY STAGE 4 CURRICULUM

- 1 Initial proposals for a revised Key Stage 4 curriculum framework were set out in the publication 'Their Future in Our Hands'. This consultation document was issued in the early part of 2001.
- 2 The proposals placed the development of skills for life and work at the centre of the statutory curriculum. The proposed framework included the following elements:
  - Key Skills (Application of Number, Communication, Information Technology, Problem-solving, Managing One's Own Learning, and Working with Others);
  - Personal Development (Personal, Social and Health Education, Citizenship, and Employability, which includes Career Management);
  - Scientific or Technological Component;
  - Creative Component;
  - Work-related Component.
- 3 We proposed that, both within and beyond the minimum requirements, individual schools would have the flexibility to offer courses that met the needs of their pupils. The content of these courses would be approved through accreditation of relevant qualifications.
- 4 There was strong support for the proposed framework for the curriculum at Key Stage 4 but opposition to the inclusion of one particular subject, Science and Technology, as a statutory requirement. Respondents were also sceptical about the value of specifying creativity separately, rather than it being infused throughout all elements of the curriculum.
- 5 In the light of the views expressed in the consultation CCEA published more detailed proposals in April 2002 in which a framework was specified along with suggested content within each of the components. The components were:
  - Key Transferable Skills;
  - Personal, Social and Health Education;
  - Citizenship;
  - Education for Employability.

- 6 The content within each of these components was suggested in the form of learning outcomes, i.e. statements of the skills and competencies that young people would be expected to develop as a result of the work done during the key stage.
- 7 The views that emerged from the consultation were very favourable in terms of these learning outcomes, but less positive than previously in relation to the framework itself. In order to explore this apparent anomaly, CCEA recently carried out some informal consultation with principals and curriculum managers in a number of post-primary schools. The explanation that emerged was that the less positive view of the framework was coloured by difficulties that schools have experienced with the current form of the Key Skills Qualification and the fear of some subject teachers that their subjects were under attack. The principals and curriculum managers confirmed their endorsement of both the framework and the learning outcomes, but asked that, to avoid misunderstanding, the term “key skills” should not be used. It has also been decided that the term “employability” lacks clarity and should be replaced by “Learning for Work”

**The Council therefore recommends that:**

- **the framework for the statutory curriculum at Key Stage 4 should consist of 4 elements**

**Transferable Skills**

**Personal, Social and Health Education**

**Citizenship**

**Learning for Work;**

- **the change to the statutory curriculum should be made as quickly as is feasible, but that, in any case, schools should have greater flexibility to determine the curriculum for their pupils in Key Stage 4 from September 2004;**
- **the content of the curriculum should be specified as learning outcomes for each of the components. These are provided in the Annex and are intended to be easily understood by both pupils and their parents;**
- **CCEA should provide guidance on both the content and implementation of the proposed statutory entitlement as soon as possible;**
- **CCEA should provide guidance on curriculum planning at Key Stage 4 in the autumn of 2003;**

- **There should be available for schools appropriate and manageable schemes for the assessment and accreditation of all of the components of the new statutory curriculum.**

8 In order to begin to give effect to the last of the recommendations, a modular GCSE course covering the last three elements, called Learning for Life and Work will be available to schools for first teaching from September 2003. In addition, the range of GCSE's in applied subjects is being extended to include single award qualifications and also to be piloted are Level 1 and 2 Certificates in Occupational Studies.

9 The Council also believes that all pupils should have the opportunity of a short period of good quality work experience at Key Stage 4. This is difficult to legislate for as a statutory entitlement, but should receive strong encouragement both from education and employers. CCEA has already produced guidelines on work placements for school pupils and intends to support quality work experience with additional materials.

10 The proposed statutory curriculum does not contain any academic subjects. This reflects the Council's view that, as indicated previously, the development of skills for life and work should be at the very centre of the curriculum for all young people. Removing academic subjects from the statutory curriculum, however, does not mean removing them from the experience of most young people. It is expected that the great majority of students will continue to follow a balanced science course, to study their own and a second language, to take an appropriate mathematics programme etc. No pupil should be deprived of the opportunity to do so and it should continue to be a statutory requirement on schools that this is the case. Limiting the statutory curriculum does mean that it will not be necessary to go through an exemption process for some students who will not be doing one or more of these subjects.

11 On the question of the second language, CCEA believes that language learning is too important to be left to age eleven as the age when teaching begins. The inclusion of some language learning in primary schools should be encouraged as soon as it is feasible to do so. The Council's advice on the curriculum in primary schools, already submitted, makes proposals to this effect. There is ample evidence that younger children are much more receptive. CCEA also believes that alternative strategies (including a different approach to timetabling) for language learning in post-primary schools should be explored as a matter of urgency. Improvement in these areas would be likely to increase the numbers of pupils achieving the sort of success that is taken for granted in many other European countries.

12 Physical education is not included as a subject in the proposed Key Stage 4 curriculum. As part of the PSHE provision, however, schools will be required to

make sure that pupils experience a programme of physical activity and to be taught about the links between exercise, diet and health. **Healthy exercise should be part of the statutory entitlement of every young person.**

- 13 The changes contained in this advice, coupled with the views we have recently submitted in relation to Key Stage 3, would lead to much greater flexibility for post-primary schools as to how they use the time available for different pupils. One concern is that some pupils might then be accelerated through to complete post-primary education early. CCEA would not favour accelerated progress of pupils through to complete advanced courses at seventeen with the prospect of beginning third-level education at that stage. Nor does CCEA believe that the flexibility should be used to increase the number of examination subjects taken. Indeed, for some pupils who currently take ten or eleven subjects, there would be merit in reducing that number in favour of more varied and open-ended challenges.
- 14 Providing choice and diversity is difficult in the context of a small school. The Council does not believe that the proposals set out above either point to or require a particular type of structure in post-primary education. However, the Council does consider that this issue of the relationship between size and the range of choice that can be offered is one that needs to be dealt with in any process of changes that takes place.

## ANNEX

### PROPOSALS FOR THE CONTENT OF THE STATUTORY KEY STAGE 4 CURRICULUM

#### Introduction

- 1 By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils should have demonstrated knowledge, understanding, skills and creativity in relation to the following areas:
  - Transferable skills;
  - Local and Global Citizenship;
  - Personal, Social and Health Education;
  - Learning for Work.
- 2 Much of what is included in the learning outcomes refers to skills, knowledge and understanding. However, it is recognised that these elements can only be developed in the context of the values and attitudes that underpin the curriculum. These attitudes and values are reflected in all aspects of school life including the school ethos, teacher pupil relationships and in the context of the particular courses studied.
- 3 Through, or in addition to, the qualifications taken at Key Stage 4, pupils should have access to a range of learning experiences which will develop the following outcomes.

## TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

### APPLICATION OF NUMBER

Pupils should be able to:

- interpret information from different sources, for example, read and understand information from written and graphical sources, including graphs, tables, charts and diagrams;
- select appropriate methods for obtaining information required, for example, grouping data when this is appropriate;
- carry out calculations to do with:
  - amounts and sizes;
  - scale and proportion;
  - handling statistics;
  - using formulae.

In these calculations they should show the methods used and operate at the levels of accuracy required. They should check the methods used to identify/correct errors and:

- interpret the results of the calculations and present the findings using graphical presentations, for example, pie charts, frequency tables or workshop drawings.

### COMMUNICATION

Pupils should be able to:

- make clear and relevant contributions to discussions, for example, express ideas or opinions, exchange information or make comments;
- help move discussions forward, for example, summarise main points or focus on the purpose;
- give a short talk using an image, for example, adapt the language to suit the purpose and situation, provide structure and use images to help others to understand the main points of the talk (picture, sketch, plan or diagram);

- select and read relevant material, for example, articles of more than three pages, reports or text books;
- identify the main points and summarise the information to suit specific purposes, for example, a talk or written report;
- present written information in different forms, for example, letters, memos, essays, including images (pictures, sketches, charts and diagrams);
- use a structure and style of writing to suit specific purposes, for example, persuasive techniques to present arguments, technical vocabulary, supporting evidence within reports;
- ensure text is legible and spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that the meaning is clear, for example, make meaning clear by proof reading and re-drafting documents.

## USE OF ICT

Pupils should be able to:

- search for information for specific purposes, for example, hand written documents, materials to be scanned, files on disks, CD-ROMs, databases and the Internet;
- interpret information and decide what is relevant to the purpose, for example, respond to an enquiry or write a report;
- enter and bring together information, for example, copy and paste or import, text images and numbers and using tabs, tables or frames to position information;
- explore information as needed, for example, follow lines of enquiry or change information in a spreadsheet;
- develop information in the form of text, images and numbers, for example, link information, restructure tables, generate charts and graphs from data or select records or files and prepare records for a database;
- derive new information, for example, compare information from different sources or use formulae to calculate information such as a total or average;
- select and use appropriate layouts for presenting combined information, for example, margins, columns, headings, borders, record structures, tables and spreadsheets.

## WORKING WITH OTHERS

Pupils should be able to:

- plan work with others;
- confirm what needs to be done;
- clarify responsibilities and confirm working arrangements;
- work co-operatively with others towards achieving given objectives;
- organise and carry out individual tasks;
- seek advice from appropriate people when needed;
- exchange information on progress;
- agree ways of improving work with others to help achieve objectives.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT

Pupils should be able to:

- confirm their short-term targets and plan how these will be met;
- identify clear action points for each target;
- plan how to use time their time well to meet the targets;
- identify when support is needed;
- select and use different ways of learning to improve performance;
- identify what targets have been met;
- identify ways of further improving performance.

## PROBLEM SOLVING

Pupils should be able to:

- identify problems accurately;

- identify different ways of solving problems;
- select and try out appropriate options for solving problems;
- check if problems have been solved and describe the results;
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of their approach.

## **LOCAL AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP**

Pupils should be able to:

- recognise and address the challenges and opportunities presented by diversity of individual, regional and international identities;
- express informed opinions about human rights;
- appreciate and acknowledge the social responsibilities of individuals, business and of government;
- demonstrate an awareness of the work and structures of government in Northern Ireland;
- demonstrate an understanding of the processes of the criminal and civil legal systems;
- participate in democratic processes, methods of conflict management and explore alternatives to violence;
- demonstrate an awareness of the role and influence of the media in democratic societies.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION**

Pupils should be able to:

- identify their own aptitudes, interest and personal qualities;
- manage their emotions and exercise self control;
- make judgements based on moral principles;
- establish and maintain positive relationships;

- identify the factors involved in maintaining a healthy lifestyle;
- recognise and analyse risk and make safe and healthy choices;
- make responsible choices when planning and managing personal finances;
- undertake, monitor and evaluate their performance across a range of challenging physical activities which contribute to a healthy lifestyle;
- identify the roles and responsibilities of parents and carers;
- analyse and discuss influences and media messages relating to a range of social issues.

## **LEARNING FOR WORK**

Pupils should be able to:

- discuss their own personal attributes and aspirations for life and work and show how these impinge on future education, training and employment choices;
- demonstrate a detailed understanding of employment levels and be able to research the entry requirements for each of the levels;
- evaluate the different types of qualifications within the 14–19 qualifications framework;
- use sources of guidance both inside and outside school;
- apply research skills to access relevant careers information, including information available through the use of ICT, and be able to evaluate this information in the context of their personal career planning;
- access and use advice and guidance sources both within and outside school;
- produce a personal career plan and demonstrate an ability to revise and update this when necessary;
- demonstrate the ability to complete the job application process and the techniques for personal effectiveness in interview situations;
- work creatively and flexibly in their approach to challenges and opportunities;
- explain how new technologies and the trend towards globalisation affects individuals, employees, the environment and society;

- demonstrate skills and qualities in a workplace environment and to provide a reflective evaluation of their work experiences;
- identify some of the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers;
- demonstrate the skills and knowledge associated with enterprise and building your own business and express informed opinions on the value of entrepreneurship and enterprise to the economic well being of Northern Ireland.