



*Rewarding Learning*

**Advice to Minister of Education on  
changes to be made to the Northern Ireland  
Curriculum and its Assessment  
Arrangements**

**January 2003**

## PREFACE

This paper sets out the Council's recommendations to the Minister on curriculum and assessment at each Key Stage. Each section is prefaced by a summary of the statistical outcomes. The full consultation report is also attached, which the Council intends to make available on its internet site as soon as possible.

Following the Minister's response to its advice, the Council will publish:

- a summary of the consultation report;
- the Council's advice; and
- the Minister's response.

The Council's recommendations, which are wide-ranging, have been greatly influenced by issues raised by respondents in the consultation process. Some issues go beyond the Council's remit but are included because they impact significantly on the potential success or otherwise of the recommendations.

In the advice which follows, the Council is recommending that the proposals on which it consulted affecting primary schools and pre-school settings should now be implemented over a period of at least five years, subject to additional positive results emerging from the current Enriched Curriculum Pilot. These proposals include significant changes to the curriculum right through the primary phase and also to the nature and purpose of statutory assessment.

The Council believes that the effect of these changes will be:

- to place the development of the whole child at the centre of the curriculum,
- to put in place a structured approach to the commencement of formal learning;
- to provide for a more integrated primary curriculum, with more explicit acknowledgement of the importance of fundamental skills such as thinking skills;
- to place greater emphasis on the role of assessment in guiding the learning process.

Final recommendations regarding changes to curriculum and assessment in post-primary schools will require further work. Some of the proposals on which the Council consulted received a mixed response, especially the more radical approach which was suggested for the specification of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The Council is recommending a further consultation process later this year on the basis of more detailed proposals for Key Stage 3. Final recommendations will be made at the end of 2003.

The position at Key Stage 4 is different in that there is clear endorsement for increased flexibility at this key stage and, indeed, some impatience in schools to see it put in place. The Council is proposing that the existing requirements be relaxed from September 2004 and that new requirements based on the proposals on which it consulted should then be put in place.

### Resources

The resource implications of the recommendations in relation to the Foundation Stage in particular are far-reaching. The Council believes, however, that front-loading resources to address the needs of very young children will reap benefits in years to come in terms of improved motivation, creativity and life-long learning. It is also hoped that the consequent reduction in re-mediation which it believes will arise from the approach recommended in the Foundation Stage, will mean that, in time, overall expenditure across the education service will not be dramatically increased. It is also hoped that the changes proposed may go some way to addressing the gender gap and the incidence, both in the early years and in later stages of education, of special educational needs and behavioural difficulties.

## **Implementation**

The Council is keen to work closely with the Department of Education and all of its educational partners to plan the process of strategic implementation over the next five to ten years, based on the Minister's response to this advice. This advice suggests that implementation of changes to the curriculum begins from September 2004 for primary schools and at Key Stage 4. Given that further consultation is required at Key Stage 3, it is envisaged that changes for this stage will not commence until September 2005.

## **Support**

The Council is preparing a range of support material to assist teachers in planning for change. These include guidance for the Foundation Stage, sample teaching plans and assessment materials for primary and post-primary schools; materials for the area of Personal Development at Key Stages 1 and 2; materials and training for Relationships and Sexuality Education across the key stages; and curriculum models and qualifications for Key Stage 4.

The Council's staff are also working closely with C2K in the planning of the Northern Ireland Managed Learning Environment (MLE) and the preparation of digital media to support the revised curriculum. Part of that work involves the development of online assessment materials and ICT systems which can record attainment and assist in report generation

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FOUNDATION STAGE

### A: THE CURRICULUM

#### 1.1 Summary of Quantitative Responses to Curriculum Proposals

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
There should be a separate Foundation Stage	<b>93.3%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
<i>The Foundation Stage should encompass the Pre-School Year and Years 1 and 2</i>	<b>85.9%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>
<i>Year 1 of primary education should be re-named and the current Year 2 should become Year 1</i>	<b>56.4%</b>	43.7%
<i>Year 2 should be designated as a transition year</i>	<b>82.3%</b>	17.7%
Areas within the Foundation Stage		
<i>Proposal for the approach to teaching and process-based learning in Year 1</i>	<b>95.0%</b>	5.0%
<i>Proposed statement on equality of opportunity for all children, including those with Special Educational Needs</i>	<b>93.8%</b>	6.2%
<i>Proposed contribution of the Foundation Stage to the aims and objectives of the whole Curriculum</i>	<b>97.0%</b>	3.0%
<i>Proposed contribution of the Foundation Stage to development of skills</i>	<b>94.0%</b>	6.0%
<i>The Proposals for Creative, Expressive and Physical Development</i>	<b>95.1%</b>	4.9%
<i>The Proposals for Language and Literacy</i>	<b>95.0%</b>	4.9%
<i>The Proposals for Mathematics and Numeracy</i>	<b>96.6%</b>	4%
<i>The Proposals for Personal Development</i>	<b>95.1%</b>	4.9%
<i>The Proposals for The World Around Us</i>	<b>92.7%</b>	7.3%

#### 1.2 The form and content of the Foundation Stage:

The Curriculum Proposals for the Foundation Stage received overwhelming support, in excess of 90% in almost every aspect. There was only one exception, the proposal to re-name Year 1.

An evaluation of the Enriched Curriculum Pilot project in 81 schools is currently being undertaken. This is showing quantifiable gains in oracy and observable gains in mental mathematics and learning dispositions. The feedback from the teachers involved is very positive, as is the response from the significant number of parents who have responded. The Council is aware of the limited quantitative evidence so far of benefits relating to reading attainment and awaits the outcomes of measurements relating to this area at the end of this academic year.

The Council is very conscious of the substantial resource implications of introducing the Foundation Stage, particularly the long term costs of providing Classroom Assistants in Year 2.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **the Foundation Stage should encompass the Pre-school Year and Years 1 and 2 of the Primary School;**
- **the Foundation Stage should comprise all the elements put forward for, and approved by consultation;**
- **the current pilot be continued and expanded to the extent that resources permit (subject to the evaluation of outcomes in Year 2);**
- **the Department prepare legislation to enable amendment of the statutory curriculum to include the proposed Foundation Stage and to allow its phased implementation from 2004, again subject to satisfactory outcomes from the evaluation of the project;**
- **the Department re-examines its current spending priorities to facilitate the resourcing of the Foundation Stage.**

### **1.3 Early Physical Development and Creativity**

The crucial importance of early physical development and creativity is now widely recognised:

**The Council recommends that:**

- **Physical Development should be designated as a separate curricular area in the Foundation Stage. This would be in line with the current Pre-school Curricular Guidance which will be revised in the near future to align with the proposed Foundation Stage;**
- **young children should have access to safe play space, both indoor and outdoor, and should be provided with adequate large and small play equipment to make physical play and creative activities both challenging and enjoyable.**

The Council is currently conducting research into the Primary Movement Programme in collaboration with the Department of Education and South-Eastern Education and Library Board. This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of such a programme on conditions such as dyslexia and other special needs and determine if these conditions might be corrected or ameliorated through a specialist physical movement programme. If this movement programme proves to be helpful, the Council will bring forward specific recommendations about the training of specialist teachers.

### **1.4 Re-naming Year 1**

The response to consultation on this issue was inconclusive. This proposal was made by a number of Primary School Principals who felt that, given that Northern Ireland has the earliest compulsory starting age for school than any other region in the UK, parents' anxieties about their children beginning to read and write formally might be lessened if this year was labelled as some kind of preparatory stage (as a Foundation Year, Reception Year or Junior Infants) as is the case in other parts of the UK.

The Council recommends that the option of re-naming Year 1 is kept under consideration and reviewed in light of further consultation with teachers and, in particular, parents of children involved in the pilot project.

### 1.5 Year 2 as a Transition Year

During Year 2 teachers should observe individual children to ascertain if their skills and dispositions are sufficiently developed to enable them to move confidently to more formal work. Observations should focus on, for example, their confidence, self-esteem, attention span, visual and oral memory, oral language skills, phonological awareness, and practical and mental maths skills. This will **not** happen at the same stage in every class across Northern Ireland, or for every Year 2 class within a school, or every child within a class. Indeed the research evidence emerging from the evaluation of the Enriched Curriculum Pilot Project indicates very clearly that, in some cases, children may not be ready for formal work until Year 3. Teachers need help and training to develop the insights and the confidence to make their own professional judgements as to when children are ready to move to more formal activities.

The Council recommends that:

- Year 2 should be considered as a year when children move at their own pace towards more formal learning;
- more information should be provided by CCEA as soon as possible on progression from Year 1 to Year 2 and into Year 3;
- further research should be undertaken to assist teachers in making judgements about more formal learning readiness;
- in-service training and resources should be provided to assist teachers in the implementation of change;
- a shared approach to early literacy development should be agreed with the Literacy Strategy and implemented consistently throughout all ELB areas.

## ***B ASSESSMENT***

### RESPONSES TO ASSESSMENT PROPOSALS – Foundation Stage

	<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>
The proposals for assessment in the pre-school year	85.6%	14.4%
Assessment proposals in Year 1 and 2	81.6%	18.4%
There should be two meetings with pre-school parents	92.3%	7.7%
There should be two meetings with Year 1 and 2 parents	84.2%	15.9%
There should be a transition report from pre-school to Year 1	87.4%	12.5%

## 1.6 Summary of key issues in assessment within the Foundation Stage

There has been a high level of “buy-in” to the assessment proposals for the Foundation Stage. However, there were a number of issues which gave respondents cause for concern:

- the variation in the range of provision including staffing of pre-school education;
- the training required to carry out assessments in pre-school and early years settings;
- the consistency and quality of the assessment information generated;
- the format of the information going forward to the primary school and being passed to subsequent teachers.

## 1.7 Assessment in Pre-school settings

**The Council recommends that:**

- a standardised *Pre-school Transition Form* summarising the child’s progress should be completed by staff in pre-school settings and passed to the Year 1 teacher and the information shared with the parents;
- training courses be established for teachers and playgroup leaders in pre-school settings to ensure a consistent approach to completion of the *Pre-School Transition Form*;
- the Department of Education review the requirements in pre-school settings and decide if any should be made statutory.

CCEA regards the information from pre-school settings as essential to each child getting the best possible start in Year 1. The information needs to be standardised and meaningful for all parties. The importance of this information will grow as DE provides funding for pre-school places for up to 96% of three year olds. Currently all arrangements in pre-school settings are non-statutory. However given the crucial nature of this information, DE may wish to consider whether such reports should be made statutory in future years in order to guarantee that the information is provided to primary schools in an appropriate format.

## 1.8 Assessment in Year 1 and 2

**The Council recommends that:**

- the formative approach to assessment set out in the proposals for Years 1 and 2 be implemented;
- the development and trialling of suitable and efficient methods of recording useful assessment information be undertaken;
- CCEA explores how the information generated by the teacher in Years 1 and 2 can best be used to provide a meaningful statutory end of year report to parents;

- **CCEA explores how the use of ICT can facilitate recording and reporting within the Foundation Stage eg by producing different styles of reports for succeeding teachers and for parents.**

The proposals, which have significant support amongst teachers, advocate an integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessment based on observation and interaction with the children. The emphasis is on formative assessment, which will enable teachers to make a sound judgment on the child's progress and development in Years 1 and 2. Record keeping would be qualitative and levels would not be used to record progress.

CCEA is currently working with teachers of children in Year 1 of the Early Years Enriched Curriculum Project to develop appropriate strategies for assessment, recording and reporting. In 2003-04 this project will be extended into Year 2. The purpose of the project is to determine how the best information can be generated and recorded with the minimum of effort and how it can be used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. A key feature of the project in the second year will be the development of strategies for passing useful information to successive teachers. Based on the findings of this project, CCEA will produce guidance and work with the ELBs to provide support for assessment in the Foundation Stage.

CCEA recognises that the workload associated with recording and reporting can be significant and onerous and will therefore explore how the same information can be tailored to meet the needs of the various stakeholders and how ICT can be used to reduce this workload.

## **1.9 Moderation**

CCEA does not propose that there should be formal moderation of the assessments of teachers in Years 1 and 2. It advocates effective training and support which would provide opportunities to discuss approaches to assessment and to develop a shared language to describe the various stages of progress and development within the Foundation Stage.

CCEA will also explore other methods of benchmarking attainment in this stage and make further recommendations later this year.

## **1.10 Meetings with parents**

The support for this proposal is overwhelming. It is backed up by research into the value of parental contacts established by the Baseline Assessment Pilots. In the Baseline Assessment Pilot, both teachers and parents found the exchange of information very useful. Examination of current practice indicates that most schools organise meeting with parents at least twice per year. CCEA wishes to reinforce that good practice.

### **The Council recommends that:**

- **it should be statutory for schools to provide two opportunities each year for parents to meet with staff in both pre-school settings and primary schools;**
- **additional meetings be held as required at the discretion of the school or setting. These meetings would not be statutory.**

Good practice indicates that the first meeting should take place at the beginning of the year and the second in the second term. Many schools currently follow that practice and CCEA is content that the timing of meetings is left to the discretion of schools.

## **C RESOURCES, TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Council is aware of the strength of opinion voiced by respondents that sufficient resources and in-service training need to be provided over the next five years to ensure the successful introduction of appropriate approaches to teaching and learning within the Foundation Stage.

### **1.13 Roll-Out of the Enriched Curriculum Pilot Project**

**The Council recommends that:**

- **the current Enriched Curriculum Pilot Project should be rolled-out in a strategic way to all schools over the next 5 years with the CASS service deploying sufficient resources to support this;**
- **from 2004/05 the arrangements for assessment and reporting in Years 1 and 2 become operational within a timetable that matches the phased implementation of the curriculum programme for Years 1 and 2. The end date for the implementation of statutory arrangements for annual reporting will be negotiated and agreed with DE. However, it would be expected that all schools would have opted into the assessment programme by 08;**
- **full-time Classroom Assistants should be made available for all Year 1 and Year 2 classes when they make the transition to the new Foundation Stage Curriculum;**
- **CCEA should continue to work closely with the ELB CASS Service and teachers to provide guidance materials and case studies of good practice to assist teachers in the planning and implementation of effective teaching and learning programmes;**
- **CCEA should extend the pilot project research into a longitudinal study in order to ascertain the medium to long term outcomes of the initiative.**

### **1.14 Special Educational Needs**

**The Council recommends that:**

- **Foundation Stage teachers, including those in pre-school settings, should be given sufficient training to help in the early diagnosis of a range of special educational needs;**
- **relevant Government Departments and other appropriate agencies and services should work in a holistic and co-ordinated way to help provide support for children in general and in particular those with special educational needs;**
- **additional resources should be made available to support children with special educational needs in mainstream classes;**
- **CCEA should work in partnership with the Special Educational Needs sector to develop appropriate guidance and resources to help implement the Foundation Stage.**

### 1.15 Pre-school provision

The Council supports the Government's policy of making a funded pre-school place available for every child whose parents wish to avail of it. By March 2003, a funded pre-school place will be available for 96% of children in Northern Ireland for a minimum of 12 1/2 hours per week. The Council also supports the policy that all funded pre-school provision is inspected in the same way by ETI.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **parents and teachers should be made aware of the availability of recent inspection reports on all pre-school settings that receive Government funding.**

### 1.16 Class sizes

As the school population declines over the next decade:

**The Council recommends that:**

- **the number of children in primary classes should be reduced, especially in the early years. In the early years, class sizes eventually should not exceed 26 children, the maximum number permitted in nursery classes;**
- **the physical size of classrooms in new build schools should be increased and, where possible, adjustments made to existing buildings to increase classroom space for younger children.**

### 1.17 Composite Classes

The Council acknowledges the concerns of teachers expressed during consultation about the difficulty of planning and implementing a very practical curriculum in composite classes, often in small classrooms. In order to allow teachers to provide effectively for the range of children in their class,

**The Council recommends that:**

- **the maximum number of children in a composite class in the Foundation Stage should eventually not exceed 22.**

### 1.18 Involving Parents

A number of respondents highlighted that many skills are developed and reinforced at home and therefore that partnership with parents is important to the overall success of this new Foundation Stage.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **every effort should be made to inform parents of the recommended approach to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage (NB The Council has already produced an information leaflet and a video for parents);**
- **the Council should work with other agencies to provide appropriate resources and support for parents.**

### 1.19 Implementation of assessment arrangements

CCEA suggests that a phased introduction of the *Pre-School Transition Form* begin in 2003/04 supported by the appropriate training. By 2007/08 or earlier, it would be expected that all pre-school settings should be making use of the *Pre-School Transition Form*.

### 1.20 Training and Support for Assessment

**The Council recommends that:**

- **the appropriate training and support is provided to teachers and staff in schools and pre-school settings to carry out assessment for learning within each year of the Foundation Stage.**

As stated above (Para 1.9) CCEA will produce guidance, which will form the basis for training for assessment for learning in the Foundation Stage.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

### A: THE CURRICULUM

#### 2.1 Summary of Quantitative Responses to Curriculum Proposals

	Agree	Disagree
<i>The curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 should be set out in Areas, rather than as separate subjects.</i>	89.4%	10.7%
<i>There should be an increased emphasis on skills</i>	94.0%	6.0%
<i>There should be a minimum entitlement in each of the Areas</i>	92.2%	7.8%
<i>Curriculum Areas should be as suggested in the proposals</i>	69.2%	30.8%
<b>Alternative Proposals:</b>	24.8%	<b>75.2%</b>
<i>Science and Technology should be a separate Area, outside the World Around Us</i>		
<i>The World Around Us should include Art and Design and Music, to facilitate stronger integration</i>	19.8%	<b>80.2%</b>
<i>Physical Education should be a separate Area, outside of Creative and Expressive</i>	28.7%	<b>71.3%</b>
<i>Physical Education should be aligned with Personal Development, to facilitate stronger integration between the health strands of both</i>	66.6%	33.4%
<i>Provision should be made in the future for the inclusion of modern languages within the Primary Curriculum</i>	81.2%	18.8%
<b>Approach and Areas at Key Stages 1 and 2</b>		
<i>Proposal for a more integrated approach to teaching and learning at Key Stages 1 &amp; 2.</i>	93.2%	6.7%
<i>Proposed statement on equality of opportunity for all children, including those with Special Educational Needs</i>	93.8%	6.2%
<i>Proposed contribution to the aims and objectives of the whole Curriculum</i>	94.7%	5.4%
<i>Proposed contribution to the development of skills</i>	92.4%	7.6%
<i>The Proposals for Creative, Expressive and Physical Development</i>	91.7%	8.3%
<i>The Proposals for Language and Literacy</i>	93.9%	6.1%
<i>The Proposals for Mathematics and Numeracy</i>	93.9%	6.1%
<i>The Proposals for Personal Development</i>	87%	12.9%
<i>The Proposals for The World Around Us</i>	86.4%	13.6%

## 2.2 The form and content of Key Stages 1 and 2

The Curriculum Proposals for Key Stages 1 and 2 received a significantly high measure of endorsement, in the region of 85-95% in almost every aspect. Where there was less support, for example for the Curricular Areas proposed, this was because a range of alternative proposals were offered. The positive response of almost 70% to the Areas proposed is considered sufficient to allow the Council to recommend these almost entirely. Only one of the alternative proposals (the alignment of PE with Personal Development) received majority support of 66.6% which, in the circumstances of alternative options, provides sufficient endorsement to merit the recommendation.

### The Council recommends that:

- the proposed curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 is implemented with the following alterations
  - the Area of Creative and Expressive and Physical Development should be re-named The Expressive Arts and should include drama and dance;
  - Personal Development should be re-named Personal and Physical Development and should include PE;
- implementation is phased over a 5 year period from 2004, utilising the ETI guidance of Self-evaluating Schools and the ELB recommendations in relation to school development planning as means of assisting schools in the management of change;
- implementation and support are planned in close co-operation with all partner agencies;
- mechanisms are established as soon as possible to ensure the appropriate alignment of Initial Teacher Training.

The Department will receive the full proposals for the Primary Curriculum before Easter, including the proposals for Year 2 which is currently under development.

## ***B ASSESSMENT***

### 2.3 ASSESSMENT PROPOSALS – Key Stages 1 and 2

The Annual Report should replace end of KS1&2 Assessment	90.3%	9.7%
The Annual Report should contain reference to Literacy, Numeracy, ICT, skills etc	63.9%	36.1%
Reporting should be in Levels from 1-5	60.5%	39.5%
Levels should be divided into three eg “+” “0” and “-”	61.6%	38.3%

## 2.4 Summary of key issues

While the proposals for assessment in the primary stage were generally well received, there were a number of issues which gave respondents cause for concern:

- the level of prescription set out in the annual report and its appropriateness for all children;
- the consistency and quality of assessment information and its effective transmission from teacher to teacher;
- the workload associated with formative assessment, recording and reporting;
- the use of levels and differentiation within levels as a means of reporting to parents;
- the level of competence in ICT required to work the new systems.

## 2.5 Assessment in the Primary Stage

On-going assessment in the primary school would emphasise the formative aspects of assessment. Teachers can use the information to determine what has been achieved and, most importantly, what the targets are for future learning. The same information, accumulated over the school year, would enable teachers to produce the annual report. This report and its content would be statutory.

Statutory annual reporting would replace the current end of key stage assessments, which occur in Years 4 and 7. The information presented in the report would be more detailed than that currently required and would give a much more rounded picture of the pupil's progress and development in school. The proposed annual report would address key elements of the "Pupil Profile" as set out in the Burn's Report.

### **The Council recommends that:**

- **a statutory standardised annual report be used in Years 3 to 7 to replace the current end of key stage assessment;**
- **the report be based on a review of formative assessments at the end of each year;**
- **the report will:**
  - **identify attainment in Talking and Listening, Reading, Writing, Numeracy and ICT;**
  - **comment formatively on competence within the curricular areas;**
  - **comment on the development of personal and interpersonal skills, and the ability to manage learning;**
- **a standardised approach to annual reporting is piloted to ensure its appropriateness and feasibility;**
- **the report be generated electronically using systems developed by CCEA;**
- **schools should have the discretion to customise the report provided that the statutory requirements have been met.**

The shift of emphasis to on-going formative assessment from summative assessment may require some teachers to adjust their approaches to teaching, learning and assessment eg the use of a common scale throughout the primary stage to record progress and achievement. However, for many it will be a confirmation of current practice or a minor adjustment. Nevertheless, to facilitate this shift, CCEA will need to work closely with the ELBs to develop an integrated inset programme to support teachers.

One area which teachers identified as causing particular concern was the assessment of skills.

## 2.6 Moderation

One issue, which was referred to frequently by teachers in the consultation, was the need to standardise assessment within and across schools. CCEA acknowledges the need for “robust” and “rigorous” arrangements but would want to ensure that the moderation arrangements did not have a negative impact on formative assessment.

### **The Council recommends that:**

- **moderation of assessment in schools be statutory;**
- **CCEA establish a rolling programme of “formative” moderation to support schools in making effective assessments and judgements;**
- **CCEA will explore the possibility of monitoring standards through a sampling approach similar to that operating in Scotland.**

The moderation process should be based on three key elements.

- Assessment training in which standards would be set as teachers review and assess exemplar materials and consider the use that can be made of the information generated. Teachers and pupils could use these exemplar materials to establish benchmarks for attainment and targets for future learning would support these tasks.
- Provision of good quality exemplar materials by CCEA linked to teaching plans and schemes of work. CCEA is currently working with a technology partner to develop an ICT based system which will provide assessment tasks and items, complete with learning outcomes, assessment criteria and exemplar materials. Use of these materials will not be statutory.
- The third element of this strategy would be to adopt a “formative” approach to moderation. This approach be a more supportive, on-going style of moderation which would occur during the school year.

It is proposed to have a rolling programme of moderation whereby roughly one third of schools would be moderated every year. As CCEA develops electronic pupil portfolios, this process could be carried out remotely and feedback to teachers could be almost immediate.

## 2.7 Maintaining Standards

Currently CCEA conducts an annual audit of statutory Assessment Units taken by pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The information provided with regard to the quality of assessment within a school is seen as very limited and CCEA proposes to discontinue this approach and explore other methods of reviewing the maintenance of standards such as the sampling approach adopted by Scotland. It will make further recommendations later in the year.

## 2.8 The Eight Level Scale

The use of the 8 level scale needs to be considered in the context of both primary and post-primary education and is addressed in Para 3.9.

# **C SUPPORT RESOURCES AND TRAINING**

## 2.10 Materials for Teachers

The Council recommends that:

- **sample Teaching Plans should be provided as soon as possible to help teachers with planning a more skills-based and integrated curriculum;**
- **Lines of Progression are provided in Mathematics and Numeracy, in collaboration with the Numeracy Strategy;**
- **detailed guidance is developed on the implementation of the revised curriculum for pupils with Special Education Needs in partnership with the Special Needs sector, which should be thoroughly consulted throughout.**

## 2.11 Skills Development

The Council recommends that:

- **CCEA (in liaison with the Education and Library Boards) should plan the nature of in-service training over the next five years which will enhance teachers' ability to help children develop personal, inter-personal, thinking, learning and ICT skills.**

## 2.12 Personal Development

The Council recommends that:

- **CCEA (in liaison with the Education and Library Boards) should strategically expand the small pilot scheme taking place in 13 schools. The experience from the expanded pilot should be used to amend the proposals where necessary; to develop and disseminate case studies and models of good practice, as well as to develop and refine support materials.**

### 2.13 Language and Literacy

**The Council recommends that:**

- **a shared approach to Language and Literacy is developed by CCEA (liaising with ETI, and the five Education and Library Boards) which is in harmony with the curriculum proposals;**
- **a strategic approach to the introduction of modern language teaching in the primary school should be undertaken over time, in line with the more detailed Council recommendations developed by the CCEA Primary Languages Project, which will be sent to the Department at the end of March.**

### 2.14 Assessment for learning

The implementation of revised statutory assessment arrangements could pose significant difficulties. The transition from the old arrangements to the new will require careful management as the new curriculum is to be phased in over a number of years. Two approaches are possible.

The current arrangements for statutory assessment continue to run until all schools have adopted the revised curriculum. A five year implementation period has been suggested which would indicate 2009/10 as the first year of statutory annual reporting and moderation in all schools.

However this approach does not cater for schools which have made the transition within that five year period and for which the current arrangements would not be an appropriate model. CCEA would therefore advocate that the current rolling programme of moderation continue but schools indicate which assessment system they are following – new or old – and moderation and reporting would be carried out appropriately. CCEA and DE would agree an end date for the current system eg June 2010.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **The current rolling programme for moderation should continue through the transition process with schools making the change at different times during that period.**
- **appropriate training and support is provided to teachers and staff in schools to carry out assessment for learning within each year of the primary phase.**

### 2.15 Transfer of Information and ICT Support

As with the Foundation Stage, good quality information should be available to successive teachers. This would ensure that there is continuity of learning for each child and would inform the setting of appropriate targets for future teaching and learning. Many teachers expressed concerns regarding both the workload associated with recording and reporting and their fitness to deliver both the new primary curriculum and its associated assessment requirements.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **CCEA develop ICT systems for recording electronically useful and significant assessment information which facilitates the generation of the statutory annual report for parents and provide useful information to subsequent teachers.**

As stated above CCEA is currently working with a technology partner. Another aspect of that work is to develop a system of recording and reporting that would facilitate formative and summative assessment along the lines set out above. The system will enable teachers to record outcomes from assessment materials generated by themselves, by CCEA, and by other curriculum and assessment providers eg packages provided by C2K. All of this useful formative information would provide the evidence needed to make the summative judgements which would be included in the statutory annual report

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY STAGE 3

### A: THE CURRICULUM

#### 3.1 Summary of Quantitative Responses to Curriculum Proposals

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<i>The statutory curriculum for Key Stage 3 should be set out in curriculum areas rather than individual subjects</i>	45.4%	<b>54.6%</b>
<i>A significant proportion of pupils should be able to complete Key Stage 3 in two years</i>	23%	<b>77%</b>
<i>Schools should be able to make use of additional flexibility in the ways suggested in para 5.2</i>	<b>61.5%</b>	38.6%
<i>The curriculum areas proposed are appropriate headings for the Key Stage 3 Curriculum</i>	<b>53.8%</b>	46.2%
<i>The statutory requirements should consist of statements of entitlement for all</i>	<b>71%</b>	29.1%
<i>The statements of entitlement should include desirable outcomes</i>	<b>82.7%</b>	17.3%
<i>Implementation should be phased over a period of time</i>	<b>95.1%</b>	4.9%
<i>It is good policy to pilot new aspects of curriculum and assessment prior to statutory introduction</i>	<b>97.5%</b>	2.5%

#### 3.2 The form and content of Key Stage 3

The Curriculum Proposals for Key Stage 3 received a mixed response. The Council acknowledges that one of the main reasons was that respondents did not feel they had been provided with enough information on which to base an informed judgement. There is overwhelming support for taking change slowly and for trialling and piloting ideas before implementation. There is also fairly strong support (over 70%) for a more minimalist statutory curriculum comprising statements of entitlement, as distinct from the current detailed Programmes of Study, with even greater approval, nearly 83%, for these to be accompanied by learning outcomes.

There is only 45% support, however, for the proposal that the curriculum should be defined in areas as opposed to subjects and only about 54% support for the Areas suggested. This reflects the strong subject identification of the majority of teachers. There was very little support, just under a quarter, for the proposal that a significant proportion of pupils should be able to complete Key Stage 3 in two years although there was significant support for the proposal that schools should be able to make use of additional flexibility, though not necessarily in the ways suggested. The qualitative comments accompanying these responses revealed that respondents were concerned about the emergence of a two-tier system which might stigmatise further those perceived to be taking a slower path.

**The Council is, therefore, not making substantial recommendations for change to the KS3 curriculum at this stage but intends to consult formally on more detailed proposals late in 2003, based on the approval for Statements of Entitlement and Learning Outcomes. Accordingly the Council acknowledges that changes at Key Stage 3 are unlikely to begin before September 2005.**

**In its development work, the Council still intends to stress the merits of improving manageability, coherence and linkages across the curriculum by highlighting generic skills and setting the curriculum out in Areas, but making subject strands clearly visible.**

**The Council will also work with schools to explore innovative approaches to time-tabling with a view to preparing a variety of curriculum models as a basis for consultation.**

### **3.3 Curriculum Areas**

Although the concept of Areas of Study has existed since the inception of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in 1989, in practice Areas have been used more as a means for ensuring breadth and as a means of time-tabling rather than as a tool for making the curriculum more coherent and manageable for pupils. 13 years later it is obvious from the response to consultation that the majority of respondents continue to favour a curriculum defined in subjects. Those in favour of a more integrated curriculum (over 45%) represent a sizeable minority.

The Council recognises teachers' concerns about the validity and profile of their subjects and accepts that concrete examples need to be offered to illustrate how effective collaboration can be achieved in practice and particularly how this can benefit and deepen pupil learning by making connections beyond subject disciplines. Piloting needs to take place and the outcomes assessed. A significant period of time needs to be set aside to engage with Heads of Department, subject teachers and Subject Associations so that a full debate of the issue can take place, informed by case study examples from piloting.

The Council is very aware that insufficient detail was provided in this consultation to allow respondents to make an informed judgement. At the moment, the Council cannot see a way round the need to address 15 curricular subjects, other than to organise these in complementary groups or Areas of learning, within which subject identity is clear. As indicated above, the Council would also encourage the development of innovative approaches to timetabling as a means of overcoming this problem.

**The Council recommends that, at the next stage of more detailed consultation on the form and content of the Key Stage 3 Curriculum (from mid-August to mid-November 2003):**

- **the statements of entitlement should be set out within curricular areas but that subject identity within these should be made clearly visible;**
- **the statements of entitlement should include desirable learning outcomes which should be specified broadly, in order to give teachers flexibility to design learning experiences to meet the differing needs of their pupils.;**
- **in so doing, explicit links across subjects and areas should be made in a way that will facilitate the planning of learning on a multi-subject perspective, where schools feel able to do so.**

## **B ASSESSMENT**

### **3.4 Outcomes of consultation**

	<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>
<b>The Annual Report should replace end of KS3 Assessment</b>	<b>66%</b>	34%
<b>Reporting should be in Levels from 1-8</b>	39.6%	<b>60.45%</b>
<b>Levels should be divided into three “+” “0” and “-”</b>	33.8%	<b>66.3%</b>
<b>Reporting should be based on areas not subjects</b>	13.3%	<b>86.7%</b>
<b>Reports should include the development of skills</b>	<b>56.6%</b>	44.4%
<b>Reports should include class/year and NI averages</b>	36.3%	<b>63.7%</b>
<b>Computer assistance will help ease the burden on teachers</b>	<b>51.1%</b>	49.1%

### **3.5 Summary of key issues**

In both curricular and assessment, many of the proposals for KS3 proved to be contentious. A number of issues gave respondents cause for concern:

- the lack of detail and exemplification in the consultation document;
- the level of prescription set out in the annual report and its appropriateness for all pupils;
- the focus for assessment in KS3 on curricular areas;
- the perceived emphasis on skills and their assessment at the expense of knowledge and understanding;
- the use of Northern Ireland averages to provide benchmarks;
- the use of levels and differentiation within levels as a means of reporting to parents;
- the capacity for ICT to deliver the expected support for teachers.

### **3.6 Assessment Arrangements at Key Stage 3**

While many teachers were unhappy with many aspects of the assessment proposals, there was a substantial group (66%) who welcomed the end of key stage testing in English, mathematics, science and Gaelge. They favoured the replacement of the existing test system by teacher assessment and statutory annual reporting.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **the current KS3 assessment arrangements be replaced by a single system of statutory standardised annual reports;**
- **schools should have the discretion to customise the report provided that the statutory requirements have been met;**
- **CCEA put in place ICT systems to generate and incorporate the basic information into the report.**

**3.7 The Focus for Reporting at KS3**

Teachers were adamant that assessment should not be based on curricular areas. Clearly no decision can be taken at this time until there is a greater consensus as to how the KS3 curriculum should be developed. CCEA would therefore suggest that assessment for KS3 be developed alongside the revised curricular proposals and be consulted upon when a more detailed and complete package has been prepared.

Teachers did recognise the importance of developing and assessing skills but asked that it should be considered as part of the reporting process and not the exclusive focus. CCEA needs to consider how to effectively balance the reporting of skills, knowledge and understanding in a way that foregrounds skills.

In these circumstances CCEA feels that only a limited number of key recommendations can be made with regard to assessment in KS3.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **any decision on the focus for assessment ie curricular area or otherwise be considered when the structure of the curriculum for KS3 is being finalised;**
- **skills be a major, but not the only component, of reporting to parents;**
- **CCEA work with teachers to identify training needs and to set out clearly the inter-relationship and interaction of skills and knowledge and understanding;**
- **CCEA carry out work to determine the most efficient and effective way of reporting skills through further consultation and trialling;**
- **the appropriate training and support is provided to teachers and staff in schools to carry out assessment for learning within each year of KS3.**

**3.8 The use of Northern Ireland averages as benchmarks**

Clearly the majority of respondents do not support this proposal as they feel the figures could be misleading or end up as being used as a form of league table. Another concern was the inability to compare like with like because of the selective system. However, it should be pointed out that this type of data is currently available to schools and parents at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and has been for some years. For many schools and parents it does provide useful benchmarks.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **the case for such comparative figures be set out more clearly and assurances given that the data available will not be used for league tables;**
- **it should be pointed out that the primary purpose of providing such information is to inform parents of how well their children are doing in school relative to the class and to other pupils of similar age in Northern Ireland.**

### **3.9 The Eight Level Scale**

The retention of the 8 level scale in primary and post-primary stages was one of the more contentious proposals in both the primary and post-primary consultation. While 60% of primary school teachers supported its retention and use, the same percentage of post-primary teachers did not. Clearly the concerns of both sets of teachers have to be addressed. It is recognised that a method of recording and reporting, which spans both primary and post-primary and provides meaningful information for a range of stakeholders must be put in place.

In Scotland and in a number of schools in Northern Ireland, a level-based approach operates throughout the school (not just in Years 4 and 7) and provides meaningful information to teachers and parents. The evidence would suggest that where levels are embedded in the on-going process of teaching, learning and assessment, the difficulties currently identified with the present system are significantly reduced. CCEA will therefore investigate further other options and explore how levels can be made more acceptable to teachers and consult again with teachers.

The conflicting outcomes can only be resolved with further information and debate.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **there should be a further focused consultation on the reporting scale;**
- **CCEA develop a number of case studies to evaluate the effectiveness of a whole school approach to assessment in levels as operated in some schools in Northern Ireland.**

## **C SUPPORT, RESOURCES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**The Council recommends that:**

- **concrete illustrations are provided to show how subjects might collaborate within and across Areas to improve learning;**
- **schools are invited and given support to pilot more collaborative approaches to learning at Key Stage 3 and that the outcomes be evaluated in terms of improved coherence, manageability and learning;**

- **schools wishing to pilot some of the ideas on flexibility, for example, improving transition in Year 8, offering sampling in Year 10 and increasing the breadth of PSHE, citizenship and workrelated activities, should be facilitated in doing so. The outcomes of these pilots should be disseminated and, as a result, further proposals might be brought forward for consultation as a result.**

### 3.10 Implementation of assessment arrangements

As with the primary stage, the implementation of revised statutory assessment arrangements in post-primary also poses significant difficulties. It is all the more uncertain because of the lack of consensus concerning the curriculum thus deferring the date when the implementation process can begin until 2005. There are two main choices.

First the present system will be run alongside the curriculum and assessment implementation period. This could mean that the present arrangements would last until 2010 if there was a five year implementation plan. Many schools would be unhappy with the continued use of tests.

A second choice would be to suspend the KS3 tests from 2006 and continue with reporting teacher assessment in English, Mathematics, Science and Gaeilge with schools opting into the new assessment and reporting arrangements as their training is completed. As with the primary stage an end date would be agreed with DE.

### 3.11 Transfer of Information

As with the previous stages, good quality information should be available to successive teachers to ensure that there is continuity of learning for each pupil and to inform the setting of appropriate targets for future teaching and learning.

#### **The Council recommends that:**

- **The Key Stage tests should be discontinued after those taken in May 2005.**
- **Teacher assessment in English, Mathematics, Science and Gaeilge should continue for those schools that have not made the transition to the new arrangements.**
- **The new arrangements for statutory annual reports should be phased in beginning from September 2005**
- **CCEA develop ICT systems for recording electronically useful and significant assessment information which facilitate the generation of the annual report and be available to subsequent teachers.**

While there is a slight majority who can see the value of ICT support within the education system and its potential to reduce workload, many teachers have significant reservations which must be addressed. CCEA must therefore work with the ELBs and RTU to promote the effective use of ICT as a management tool while at the same time working with technology partners to ensure that effective and teacher friendly systems are put in place.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **CCEA put in place an ICT support system which is teacher and pupil friendly and which meets their needs;**
- **ICT support systems are only put in place when they have been trialled and tested and are fit for purpose;**
- **teachers are trained in the use of the systems to ensure that pupils obtain the maximum benefit.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY STAGE 4

### A: THE CURRICULUM

#### 4.1 Summary of Quantitative Responses to Curriculum Proposals

	Agree	Disagree
<i>The statutory curriculum for Key Stage 4 should consist of the key transferable skills plus personal, social and health education, citizenship and education for employability</i>	52.7%	47.3%
<i>It is unnecessary to include legal requirements to study particular subjects at this stage</i>	47.8%	52.2%
<i>There should be a new approach to language learning, starting in Primary Schools</i>	96.2%	3.9%
<i>The requirement for healthy exercise being part of the PSHE programme</i>	78.7%	21.2%
<i>Pupils should <u>not</u> be encouraged to complete their advanced qualifications at 17</i>	90.3%	9.7%
<i>We should be aiming to reduce the number of examination subjects taken by some pupils</i>	85.8%	14.2%
<i>Different types of qualifications should be available to all pupils. Pupils should be able to do vocational subjects and GCSEs. Need parity of esteem for all qualifications</i>	95%	4.9%

#### Content of the Key Stage 4 Curriculum

<i>The Key Stage 4 requirements should be set out in the form used in paragraphs 9.1-9.3</i>	40%	60%
<i>application of number</i>	81.1%	19%
<i>communication</i>	81.5%	18.5%
<i>Information and Communication Technology</i>	86.4%	13.6%
<i>working with others</i>	83.5%	16.5%
<i>self management</i>	83.6%	16.4%
<i>problem-solving</i>	83.3%	16.8%
<i>Local and Global Citizenship</i>	71.9%	28.1%
<i>Personal, Social and Health Education</i>	77.2%	23.8%
<i>Employability</i>	81.7%	18.3%

#### 4.2 The form and content of Key Stage 4

The Council consulted previously on proposals for a framework for key Stage 4: *"Their Future in Our Hands"* (February 2001). At that stage, the proposals received overwhelming support. By comparison, in the present consultation, only around half of those responding agreed with the change to a statutory curriculum centred on key skills and personal development only. The main issues identified by those not supporting the proposals centred on the current key skills qualification and the removal of any statutory requirements covering individual subjects.

In relation to key skills, it is clear from the qualitative responses to consultation that respondents were heavily influenced by reservations over the current form of the key skills qualification. The Council shares schools' reservations about the current qualification and expects that there will be significant changes in the near future as a result of the review of the Key Skills Qualification now taking place.

In relation to the continuation of some statutory requirement linked to subjects, around half of respondents indicated a preference for some legal requirement but there was no agreement as to what subjects should be specified. Schools need to be re-assured that there is an expectation that pupils will continue to meet the proposed curriculum requirements, including the key skills requirements, through study of an appropriately diverse and balanced range of subjects, mostly for GCSE qualifications. The Council intends to consult schools and others in the near future about a range of curriculum models which will illustrate these continuing expectations. This informal consultation should be completed in time for final recommendations about the detailed content of the Key Stage 4 curriculum to be provided by Easter.

There were three subjects in particular which significant numbers of respondents wished to remain part of the statutory requirements. These were modern languages, science and PE. The Council remains convinced that it is important that most pupils should continue to study the first two of these and that all pupils should continue to have an exercise programme as part of their curriculum. In relation to the modern languages and science, the Council's view is that there are some pupils for whom further study will not be productive at this stage, at least under current arrangements.

As has already been made clear the Council wishes to institute a programme of language learning in primary schools and to review the approach to language learning in Key Stage 3. It would be hopeful that those changes, long-term as they are, would bring about a situation where more pupils would feel that continuing to learn a language into Key Stage 4 and beyond would be of interest to them and of value to their futures.

CCEA has been monitoring work done in England towards a new approach to science in Key Stage 4 that would focus on the application of science in social and environmental contexts. Schools in Northern Ireland are being encouraged to participate in pilot studies. There is already on offer the new Science (Applied) subject in GCSE with a vocational slant. Again, the Council would be optimistic that such new approaches to the science curriculum will make it more likely that the broadest possible spectrum of young people will find an opportunity to study science in Key Stage 4 in a form that will have relevance and be of value to them.

The lobby for continuation of Physical Education was the most intense. The Council has considered the views submitted carefully and believes that the very real concerns about the need clearly to connect health and exercise in the minds of young people can be addressed most effectively through the statutory requirements which are proposed for Personal, Social and Health Education which would include a requirement for schools to provide a programme of exercise for every pupil. In view of the strength of the representations received, the Council proposes to consult further with interested stakeholders to agree how best this should be incorporated in the statutory regulations.

Following this further informal consultation stage, the Council will provide detailed proposals by Easter to put in place statutory requirements for Key Stage 4 that will be centred on the Key Skills, including the wider Key Skills and also on PSHE, Citizenship and Employability

The Council welcomes the overwhelming support (over 95%) that *different types of qualifications should be available to all pupils* and the very strong support for the view that *We should be aiming to reduce the number of examination subjects taken by some pupils*, and that *Pupils should not be encouraged to complete their advanced qualifications at 17*. The Council considers that more time should be made available for 14-19 year olds to engage in more active experiences within and beyond school that provide opportunities to develop citizenship, health and employability-related skills. A modular GCSE to cover the areas of Citizenship, PSHE and Employability has been developed and will be piloted from September 2003.

**The Council recommends that:**

- **further informal consultation is undertaken with stakeholders on the content of the curriculum at Key Stage 4, with a view to providing final recommendations to the Minister before Easter;**
- **Additional flexibility should be introduced from September 2004 with the new requirements phased in thereafter;**
- **Schools are encouraged to diversify the qualifications they offer to students post 14, to include a wider selection of courses in vocational subjects than is currently available;**
- **Guidance is developed on healthy exercise, in partnership with relevant agencies.**

## **B SUPPORT, RESOURCES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**The Council recommends that:**

- **all schools are encouraged to diversify the range of practical experiences open to young people and that schools that wish to pilot initiatives in citizenship, employability and PSHE are supported in doing so and CCEA work in collaboration with the ELB CASS service to provide strategic support for this;**
- **CCEA, in partnership with health and physical education support personnel, develops guidance for all schools on the value of healthy exercise.**