

*Northern Ireland Curriculum Review*

***Phase 1 Consultation***

---



***Proposals for changes  
to the Northern Ireland  
curriculum Framework***

***April–June 2000***

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>	
<b>Section A</b>	Summary of Proposals	4
<b>Section B</b>	Background and Rationale for the proposals	7
	Background to the Review	8
<b>Objective 1</b>	Clarify Aims, Objectives and Values	10
<b>Objective 2</b>	Clarify Generic Skills	14
<b>Objective 3</b>	Improve Curriculum Relevance and Enjoyment	16
	3.1 Rationale for Increased Relevance and Enjoyment	16
	3.2 Personal Development	17
	3.3 Citizenship	18
	3.4 Employability	20
<b>Objective 4</b>	Improve balance, coherence and flexibility at each Key Stage	23
	Rationale for changes to the Area of Study Framework	23
	4.1 Key Stage 1 Proposals	25
	4.2 Key Stage 2 Proposals	29
	4.3 Key Stage 3 Proposals	32
	4.4 Key Stage 4 Issues for further consultation	35
	4.5 Proposals for a revised access statement	37
<b>Objective 5:</b>	Development assessment mechanisms which better match curriculum aims	40
<b>Objective 6:</b>	Develop strategies to manage change	42
<b>Acknowledgements</b>		43
<b>References</b>		44

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

*(For explanation of the rationale for each of these proposals please refer to the corresponding paragraphs in Section B of this booklet)*

### 1.1 Proposed Aim of the Northern Ireland Curriculum

It is proposed that the current aim be replaced with a statement which focuses on the desired outcomes of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in terms of how young people will **make use of** the skills, values, attitudes and knowledge gained in making life decisions. The suggested new aim for the Northern Ireland Curriculum is:

- 1.2 to enable young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives.

### 1.3 Proposed Objectives of the Northern Ireland Curriculum

It is proposed that the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum should have three interdependent curriculum objectives within which a range of key elements are identified. (See Table 1 Page 13).

- 1.4 The Northern Ireland Curriculum should provide learning opportunities for each young person to develop as:
1. an individual;
  2. a contributor to society; and
  3. a contributor to the economy and the environment.

### 1.5 Proposed Values underpinning the Northern Ireland Curriculum

It is proposed that the following values statements are clearly stated as underpinning each of the Curriculum Objectives.

- We value:
1. each individual's unique capacity for spiritual, moral, emotional, physical and intellectual growth;
  2. equality, justice and human rights within our society and our capacity as citizens to resolve conflict by democratic means;
  3. the environment as the basis of life and the need to sustain it for future generations; and
  4. each individual's right to work and to earn a living in accordance with personal preferences and attributes.

## 2.1 Proposed Generic Skills of the Northern Ireland Curriculum

It is proposed that the generic skills of the curriculum are defined under six overlapping and interdependent categories, within which a range of contributory skills may be identified (See Table 2 Page 15).

- 2.2
1. Personal skills;
  2. Interpersonal skills;
  3. Thinking skills;
  4. Learning skills;
  5. ICT skills;
  6. Physical skills.

- 3.1 Proposals to improve the relevance and enjoyment of the Northern Ireland Curriculum for all learners

It is proposed that:

- 3.2 there should be a specific programme for **Personal Education** as a statutory entitlement for all young people from Key Stages 1 to 4.

- 3.3 there should be a specific programme for **Citizenship** as a statutory entitlement at Key Stage 3 and 4.

- 3.4 there should be specific provision for education for **Employability** as a statutory entitlement at Key Stages 3 and 4.

## 4 Proposals to improve the balance, coherence and flexibility of the Northern Ireland Curriculum at each Key Stage

It is proposed that the content which is specified will be mostly that contained in the current Programmes of Study, but that this is slimmed where possible and organised as follows:

- 4.1 **At Key Stage 1** the curriculum is prescribed within five areas, with the emphasis on an **integrated** approach within and across the areas of:
1. Literacy;
  2. Numeracy;
  3. Creativity;
  4. Personal Development; and
  5. The World About Us.

The Key Stage 1 curriculum will focus mainly on the development of skills. In Year 1 the focus should be on oracy, practical mathematics, personal development and learning through structured play.

**4.2** At **Key Stage 2** the curriculum is prescribed within the same five areas as at Key Stage 1, but with identifiable strands within two of the five areas that relate to the emerging subject disciplines as follows:

- Creativity – reflecting aspects of Art and Design, Music and Physical Education
- The World About Us – reflecting aspects of Science and Technology, Geography and History

The curriculum within all five areas would be defined in terms of reduced core content and options, with greater emphasis on skills and on topics which encourage linkages within and across the areas.

**4.3** It is proposed that, at **Key Stage 3**: the curriculum is prescribed in terms of **subject programmes of study**, as at present (with the addition of programmes relating to Personal Development, Citizenship and Employability), and that the programmes of study be reviewed on the basis of the percentage time allocation set out at 4.3.2.

Curriculum coherence would be strengthened by linkages based on

- the generic framework of skills; and
- common issues which might be investigated from a range of subject perspectives.

**4.4** At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is influenced both by statutory provision and by the regulation of the qualifications offered to young people at 16.

It is proposed that the Council consults with all of the stakeholders as to how the relationship between those twin methods of control should be treated in the context of this review.

**BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW**

**AND**

**RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSALS**

# Background to the Review

## Introduction

These proposals represent the outcome of the first phase of curriculum review undertaken between November 1999 and March 2000. This first phase of consultation is to allow teachers, and other partners in the education process, to consider the broader issues which need to be addressed in advance of subject review which will take place from September 2000 to March 2001. A second phase of consultation on the revised Programmes of Study will take place from April to June 2001.

## CCEA's Remit

The Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) is responsible for keeping under review all aspects of the curriculum, examinations and assessment for grant-aided schools and providing advice to the Department of Education on any adjustments which may need to be made to curriculum and assessment specifications to meet changing needs.

## CCEA's Advice on Curriculum Review

In fulfillment of its remit the Council offered, in January 1999, strategic advice to the then Minister of Education entitled "*Developing the Northern Ireland Curriculum to meet the needs of young people, society and the economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*". The aim of the review is to provide a curriculum and assessment framework that is capable of "*meeting the changing needs of pupils, society and the economy; which had the confidence of teachers, pupils, parents, employers and the wider public; and which widens educational opportunity and improves learner motivation and achievement*". The stated objectives of the review are as follows:

- 1 *to clarify the aims and values of the school curriculum;*
- 2 *to improve progression in skill development;*
- 3 *to improve curriculum relevance and enjoyment for all learners;*
- 4 *to provide greater balance, coherence and flexibility at each Key Stage;*
- 5 *to develop assessment mechanisms which better serve curriculum aims; and*
- 6 *to develop strategies for managing future change.*

Approval to proceed with the review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum was given by the Department of Education in October 1999. In the letter of remit to the Council, the Minister asked that:

- in clarifying the aims and values of the curriculum, the rationale should be fully explained;
- proposals for increased flexibility at Key Stage 4 should be set in the context of the pupil's entitlement to a wide range of experiences;

- appropriate attention should be given to the use of ICT and so contribute to the implementation of the Department's ICT strategy;
- appropriate attention should also be paid to the need to maximise young people's employability;
- it is essential that the final outcomes take account of the demands and pressures on the curriculum time available by ensuring that the work of the various groups, the support staff and the overview group are inter-related.

### **Methodology**

Each Working Group included practising teachers, representatives from the teaching unions, as well as a representative from CCMS and from the Education and Library Boards. The advice was coordinated through an Overview Group which included principals from primary and post-primary schools, Department of Education inspectors, advisers from the research and health sectors as well as senior Union, CCMS and ELB representatives.

# Review Objective 1: Clarify the Aim, Objectives and Values

## 1.1 Rationale for changes to the current aim of the NI Curriculum

The Council's advice to the Minister on *Developing the Northern Ireland Curriculum to meet the needs of young people, society and the economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (January 1999) highlighted the need for a clearer rationale for the Northern Ireland Curriculum, which gives more explicit emphasis to the development of values and clearer direction to teachers about what the Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to achieve.

The current aim of the Northern Ireland Curriculum is:

- (a) *to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society; and*
- (b) *to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.*

In general teachers felt that many aspects of the aim were of such importance in the education process that they should be strengthened and placed at the centre of curriculum planning.

While teachers considered that there was sufficient emphasis within the Northern Ireland Curriculum on intellectual development, they felt that insufficient attention was being paid to the other aspects of the aim such as the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical dimensions, and the preparation of young people for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The issue of young people's social development, implied but not specified in the aim, was also felt to be neglected. In addition, many teachers, particularly in primary schools, indicated the need to reflect the importance in the educational process of young people's emotional development.

In relation to preparing young people for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, many teachers pointed out that it was equally important to emphasise the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences which young people face before the onset of adulthood. Rather than emphasising preparation for adulthood alone, it was felt that the emphasis of the curriculum should relate to preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences that present themselves throughout people's lives.

The findings from the Council's research into *Values in Education in Northern Ireland* highlighted similar concerns about insufficient emphasis within the curriculum on the development of values. The findings from the Cohort Study also indicated that pupils are largely unaware of the aim of the curriculum at classroom level or the values that underpin it. The research also suggests that the overall aim of the Northern Ireland Curriculum is rarely referred to in curriculum planning.

## 1.2 Proposal for a revised aim

It is proposed, therefore, that the aspects of learning referred to in the current aim should be articulated within curriculum objectives, which will then be used to give direction to programmes of study. This will ensure that important aspects of the current aim will be **more fully** reflected in curriculum planning.

It is proposed that the current aim be replaced with a statement which focuses on the desired outcomes of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, in terms of how young people will **make use of** the skills, values, attitudes and knowledge gained.

The proposed aim for the Northern Ireland Curriculum is:

to enable young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives.

## 1.3 Rationale for Curriculum Objectives

The current Northern Ireland Curriculum does not set out curriculum objectives as such. Rather, there are six Educational (Cross-curricular) Themes, (Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage, Health Education, Information Technology, Careers Education and Economic Awareness) and two Cross-curricular dimensions (Environmental Education and The European Dimension), each with a number of objectives and elaboration statements.

Various pieces of research have suggested that most teachers are unfamiliar with the objectives of the themes and hold widely differing views about their importance within the educational process. The result is that commitment to the implementation of the Themes varies enormously. While some very good work has been done in implementing the themes, many observers believe that they have had limited impact. It should be remembered that the Cross-curricular Themes have not previously been subjected to review and have remained as originally written ten years ago.

In the intervening period, a number of other areas of learning such as citizenship, education for parenthood, and media education, development education and sustainability, have been raised by a variety of reports and lobby-groups as requiring attention within the curriculum. At the same time, the appropriateness of defining Information Technology as a cross-curricular theme, as opposed to a cross-curricular skill or methodology, has been highlighted.

To cater for these important aspects of learning within the Northern Ireland Curriculum requires:

- the absorption of these issues into the current Cross-curricular Themes;
- the creation of a number of additional Cross-curricular Themes; or
- a rationalisation of these many important strands of learning into clear curriculum objectives.

## 1.4 Proposal for Curriculum Objectives

It is proposed that the revised NI Curriculum should have three curriculum objectives, which are overlapping and interdependent, as follows:

The Northern Ireland Curriculum should provide learning opportunities for each young person to develop as:

1. an individual;
2. a contributor to society; and
3. a contributor to the economy and the environment.

The key elements within each objective encompass important aspects of the current aim and the current cross-curricular themes, as well as embracing other learning which has been highlighted as important. This includes citizenship, development education and sustainability, education for parenthood, employability, financial literacy and media education.

**The elaborated objectives are set out in tabular form in Table 1 (over).**

It is proposed that these elaborated objectives be used in the review of subjects to give clear direction and purpose within the Programmes of Study of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Where it is felt that elements of the objectives cannot be sufficiently catered for within the current statutory subjects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, then specific provision may be proposed, for example, in relation to Personal Development, Citizenship and Employability.

## 1.5 Values

The current Northern Ireland Curriculum does not set out the values underpinning the curriculum as such. Rather, the values underpinning the Northern Ireland Curriculum are implied within the Educational Cross-curricular Themes and the Programmes of Study for subjects.

It is proposed that the following values are clearly stated as underpinning each of the Curriculum Objectives.

1. We value each individual's unique capacity for spiritual, moral, emotional, physical and intellectual growth;
2. We value equality, justice and human rights within our society and our capacity as citizens to resolve conflict by democratic means;
3. We value the environment as the basis of life and the need to sustain it for future generations; and
4. We value each individual's right to work and to earn a living in accordance with personal preferences and attributes.

**Table 1: illustrating the revised aim and objectives of the NI Curriculum**

**Aim**

The Northern Ireland curriculum aims to enable young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives.

**Curriculum Objectives**

The Northern Ireland Curriculum should provide learning opportunities for each young person to develop as:

1. *an individual;*
2. *a contributor to society; and*
3. *a contributor to the economy and the environment.*

*Throughout the curriculum, by taking appropriate opportunities to focus on the key elements in bold, teachers should help pupils to:*

<i>As an individual</i>	<i>As a contributor to society</i>	<i>As a contributor to the economy and environment</i>
<p><b>(personal understanding)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect themselves, understand their rights and responsibilities;</li> <li>• understand and manage their emotions;</li> <li>• learn how to learn and be committed to learning;</li> <li>• be aware of their creative potential;</li> <li>• become self-reliant.</li> </ul> <p><b>(mutual understanding)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect and co-operate with others;</li> <li>• manage and resolve conflict;</li> <li>• develop and sustain safe, caring relationships;</li> <li>• learn the skills of parenting.</li> </ul> <p><b>(personal health)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• live a healthy lifestyle and make healthy choices;</li> <li>• contribute positively to their peer group.</li> </ul> <p><b>(moral character)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• show fairness and integrity in dealing with others;</li> <li>• be reliable and committed to tasks;</li> <li>• take responsibility for choices and actions.</li> </ul> <p><b>(spiritual awareness)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop an inner appreciation of life purpose;</li> <li>• develop the personal strengths and resources to cope with adversity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>(citizenship)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect the equal rights of others;</li> <li>• recognise the interdependence of people, communities and the environment;</li> <li>• be willing to negotiate and compromise;</li> <li>• use democratic means to influence change;</li> <li>• contribute to the welfare of school, the community and the environment.</li> </ul> <p><b>(cultural understanding)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise the richness and diversity of cultural influences in contemporary society;</li> <li>• engage with human cultural achievement in a range of forms and contexts.</li> </ul> <p><b>(media awareness)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be critically aware of the range of print, sound, moving image and graphic media;</li> <li>• assess the role and influence of media within society;</li> </ul> <p><b>(ethical awareness)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of some of the dilemmas arising from scientific, technological and environmental change;</li> <li>• assess the human and environmental impact of ethical choices and take action as appropriate</li> </ul>	<p><b>(employability)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of the impact of technology and global markets on work patterns and prospects;</li> <li>• be proactive, enterprising, adaptable and open to new ideas;</li> <li>• enhance career options through life-long learning;</li> <li>• be aware of the rights of workers and employers.</li> </ul> <p><b>(economic awareness/sustainable development)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the economic interdependence of individuals, organisations and communities locally and globally;</li> <li>• critically examine how wealth is created and distributed;</li> <li>• make balanced and informed economic judgements;</li> <li>• be discerning and effective consumers;</li> <li>• plan and manage personal finances effectively.</li> </ul> <p><b>(environmental responsibility)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• think globally, act locally;</li> <li>• cut down on waste and prevent pollution;</li> <li>• save energy and natural resources;</li> <li>• look after the local environment;</li> <li>• encourage bio-diversity.</li> </ul>

## Review Objective 2: Clarify Generic Skills

### 2.1 Rationale for a framework of generic skills

In the volume of literature about the likely requirements of the future, perhaps the issue that is raised most frequently is that of transferable skills. The importance of the basic skills (defined as oracy; literacy; and numeracy) and the key skills (defined as communication; application of number; IT; problem solving; working with others; and improving own learning and performance) is increasingly recognised by teachers and stressed by employers. Evidence from pupil performance in GNVQ suggests that an appropriate emphasis on skills can transform learning and teaching, as well as pupils' motivation and self-confidence.

Responses to the monitoring programme suggest teachers at Key Stages 1 and 2 are fairly clear about the range of skills which they are trying to develop through the various elements of the curriculum. Teachers at Key Stages 3 and 4 were much less confident about identifying a common core of skills. This uncertainty is borne out by evidence from the Cohort Study. When asked specifically to identify links between subjects, most pupils were able to do so in terms of aspects of content, for example, common knowledge, concepts or topics but references to overarching skills were extremely rare. The Council's research into the teaching of graphical skills across the curriculum corroborates this evidence. It reveals a lack of awareness among teachers of their collective contribution to the teaching of graphical and related skills and, consequently, a lack of whole curriculum planning to that effect. Conversely, evidence from the Council's research into *Activating Children's Thinking Skills* (ACTs) indicated widespread agreement among subject teachers about a core of thinking skills to which all aspects of the curriculum make a contribution, although these might be differently described from subject to subject.

### 2.2 Proposals for a framework of generic skills

It is proposed that the generic skills of the curriculum are defined under six overlapping and interdependent categories within which a range of contributory skills may be identified.

1. Personal skills;
2. Interpersonal skills;
3. Thinking skills;
4. Learning skills;
5. ICT skills;
6. Physical skills.

*These categories of generic skills contribute to the development of key skills.*

The framework encompasses and extends beyond the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and the six key skills. The contributory skills within each category are elaborated over **in Table 2**.

## Table 2: illustrating the Framework for Generic Skills in the Curriculum

Personal Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Thinking Skills	Learning Skills	ICT Skills	Physical Skills
<p><b>Personal skills</b> are those skills which are necessary for effective operation at an individual level. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self management:</b> the ability to recognise and deal with personal characteristics, strengths and limitations, emotions, behaviours and experiences in a range of situations and contexts;</li> <li>• <b>Self-reliance:</b> the ability to be self-directed, to work independently and to undertake and complete tasks on an individual basis;</li> <li>• <b>Assertiveness:</b> the ability to express a personal view in a positive and non-threatening manner;</li> <li>• <b>Language and literacy:</b> the ability to engage with the spoken and written word in various forms;</li> <li>• <b>Application of number:</b> the ability to select and apply a range of numerical skills to real situations and contexts in order to meet a desired outcome;</li> <li>• <b>Creativity:</b> the ability to be imaginative and inventive in creating outcomes and products.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Interpersonal skills</b> are those skills which are necessary for effective interaction with others. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communication:</b> the ability to select and apply a range of appropriate communication skills in order to express oneself effectively within a range of situations and contexts;</li> <li>• <b>Working with others:</b> the ability to collaborate with others in working towards a common goal.</li> <li>• <b>Empathy:</b> the ability to engage with the feelings and contexts experienced by others;</li> <li>• <b>Leadership:</b> the ability to assume responsibility and to motivate others towards the achievement of a particular goal.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Thinking skills</b> are those intellectual skills which are necessary for the realisation of human potential. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Critical thinking:</b> the ability to use a range of analytical, evaluative and decision-making processes in order to achieve a reasoned outcome;</li> <li>• <b>Creative thinking:</b> the ability to generate “new” ideas, visualise processes and imagine outcomes;</li> <li>• <b>Caring thinking:</b> the ability to be sensitive to the contexts, experiences and needs of others;</li> <li>• <b>Problem solving:</b> the ability to select and apply a range of appropriate skills to meet an identified need or produce a desired outcome.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning skills</b> are those skills which enable the individual to engage with uncertainty and address the process of change. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self-assessment:</b> the ability to reflect on personal strengths and weakness as a basis for identifying learning needs and evaluating new learning;</li> <li>• <b>Learning styles:</b> the ability to identify, expand and monitor preferred ways of learning;</li> <li>• <b>Goal-setting:</b> the ability to set short and longer-term targets for learning and to identify strategies by which they can be met;</li> <li>• <b>Information handling:</b> the ability to access knowledge and to devise strategies for assimilation and recall;</li> <li>• <b>Improving own learning and performance:</b> the ability to select and apply a range of appropriate skills to promote self improvement.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ICT skills</b> are the means by which individuals can engage effectively with a fast-changing, technological world of information and communication. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communication:</b> the ability to use ICT as a tool for accessing and communicating ideas using a range of media including print, sound, moving image and graphics;</li> <li>• <b>Information handling:</b> the ability to access, store, manipulate and present information;</li> <li>• <b>Modelling:</b> the ability to use ICT to create and use models and simulations;</li> <li>• <b>Measurement and Control:</b> the ability to use ICT to measure the physical environment and control events.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical skills</b> are those skills which are necessary for efficient body movement and effective manipulation of physical objects in a range of contexts. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gross motor movement:</b> the ability to control limbs and perform large bodily movements;</li> <li>• <b>Fine motor movement:</b> the ability to manipulate small objects with precision and to coordinate hand and eye;</li> <li>• <b>Observation:</b> the ability to focus visual attention;</li> <li>• <b>Audition:</b> the ability to focus listening attention.</li> </ul>

## Review Objective 3: Improve Relevance and Enjoyment

### 3.1 Rationale for increased relevance and enjoyment

One of the major concerns expressed by employers is that the curriculum focuses on cognitive learning without the need to apply it to real-life contexts. The Cohort Study reveals that young people have difficulty in seeing relevance in much of what they are required to learn in school, except in the sense of acquiring qualifications which will allow them to progress to higher education or employment. The CCEA Conference *Mindpower 21* explored the findings of recent brain research which suggests that long-term effective learning takes place when the learner is motivated by relevance and by emotional engagement with the subject matter. The inference drawn from these findings is that the relevance and application of subject learning to modern day life and future employment needs to be highlighted more strongly.

The CBI Brief *Greater expectations: Priorities for the future curriculum* contends that too often the curriculum is divided from “work-related” learning. It stresses the need to recognise that learning for life is a continuous process, and that developing **employability** is not a narrow, marginal or separate activity. It is central to the role of the curriculum, just as work is central to most people’s lives. The type of learning that employers consider is “work-related” is much broader than narrow conceptions of “can do” skills. While there is an obvious desire for competence in literacy and numeracy, modern conceptions of preparedness for work stress qualities such as interpersonal competence and confidence, thinking skills, responsibility, creativity and the ability to work in a team.

Much of the literature from business also stresses that **personal development** is as important in preparing young people for life and for work as other traditionally valued aspects of the curriculum. Teachers’ responses to the Council’s research into *Values in Education in Northern Ireland* and to the monitoring programme at all Key Stages, indicated that there is insufficient emphasis within the curriculum on the development of personal, social and emotional education. The *Mindpower 21* Conference highlighted the particular need to bolster the self-esteem of pupils at puberty and to focus on issues of concern to them at this turbulent time in their physical and emotional development.

Also neglected in current curriculum specifications is the issue of educating young people about **citizenship**, democracy and constructive social, civic and political participation. This is particularly important in Northern Ireland, which has experienced a lengthy period of democratic deficit since 1971. The most dramatic and significant change within society in Northern Ireland recently has been the move away from violence towards a culture that supports democratic politics. Education has a responsibility to support this.

There has already been a commitment to the improvement of community relations through Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) which, along with Cultural Heritage, has promoted inter-cultural understanding and contact. Research by Smith and Robinson (*EMU, the Initial Statutory Years*) indicates, however, that more controversial political and social issues tend to be avoided in schools and that there is a specific need to strengthen young people’s social, civic and political awareness. Within this agenda there is also a need to educate young people about sustainable development that will preserve the quality of life of future generations.

## **3.2 Personal Development**

### **3.2.1 Rationale for a programme of Personal Education at Key Stages 1–4**

The scope and pace of social change and the pervasiveness of media influence means that young people are challenged, sometimes at a very young age, by choices, pressures and distractions which pose personal, social and moral dilemmas. Young people themselves have articulated, through the Cohort Study research, a strong desire that pressures, for example, in relation to drugs and sexual activity, are discussed in schools. This view is also endorsed by teachers, in their response to the monitoring programme, and is strongly supported by the Health Boards and Health Promotion Agency. Spiralling statistics in relation to teenage pregnancy and alcohol and drug abuse suggest that educating young people to make informed and responsible choices and decisions is not only an educational, but also, a social and economic imperative.

### **3.2.2 Proposals for Personal Education**

All teachers will make an important contribution to the personal development of young people and there is potential for raising issues relating to personal development throughout the curriculum. Potential subject contributions to enhancing personal development will be clearly identified as part of the review of subjects in Phase 2 of the Review.

In addition to cross-curricular provision, it is proposed that a specific programme, called Personal Education should be a statutory entitlement for all young people from Key Stages 1 to 4.

### **3.2.3 Aim of Personal Education**

The aim of Personal Education is to help pupils to become personally, emotionally and socially empowered to live healthy, safe and fulfilled lives and to make informed and responsible choices and decisions.

### **3.2.4 Objectives of Personal Education**

The proposed framework for Personal Education has three objectives with inter-related values and skills. Using appropriate teaching strategies, particularly those allowing for active pupil participation, pupils should have opportunities to develop in relation to personal, social, health and emotional life contexts:

#### **Personal Understanding**

including understanding emotions, self-awareness, self-control, empathy, motivation and social skills as well as aspects of intellectual, moral and spiritual development.

#### **Personal Health**

including a healthy mind and body; the ability to make positive health choices, develop positive, sustained relationships; and awareness of potential health and safety hazards.

Living in the Local and Wider Community (Key Stages 1 and 2 only)\*

including the development of informed, active members of the community, who recognise their rights and responsibilities.

*\*Note: at Key Stages 3 and 4, more detailed provision for this strand will be made under Citizenship and Education for Employability.*

### 3.3 Citizenship

#### 3.3.1 Rationale for a programme of Education for Citizenship at Key Stage 3

Northern Ireland has experienced a lengthy period of democratic deficit since 1971. The efforts to move away from violence towards a culture that supports democratic politics have focused attention on the need for young people to become more aware of their contribution to the effective functioning of democratic society in Northern Ireland, as well as in a European and global context.

There has already been a commitment to the improvement of community relations through Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage. The need for a more focused approach to achieving tolerance and democracy in Northern Ireland was specifically highlighted in the Good Friday Agreement (1998) and recently by the report, *Towards a Culture of Tolerance, Education for Diversity (DENI 1999)*. These proposals for a discrete programme in Democratic Citizenship, are a response to this report and are in line with developments across Europe and in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, where there is a growing emphasis on citizenship education.

#### 3.3.2 Proposals for Education for Citizenship at Key Stages 3

Many elements of the curriculum will make important contributions to education for citizenship and there is potential for considerable diversity in teaching and learning about the current social and political context in the curriculum. Potential subject contributions to enhance citizenship education will be clearly identified as part of the review of subjects in Phase 2 of the Review.

In addition to cross-curricular provision, it is proposed that there should be a specific programme for Citizenship at Key Stage 3.

*At Key Stages 1 and 2, education for citizenship will be catered for within Personal Development under the theme of "Living in the Local and Wider Community".*

### 3.3.3 Aim of Citizenship

The aim of education for citizenship is to develop the capacity of young people to participate in a fair and inclusive society throughout their lifetime.

### 3.3.4 Objectives of Citizenship

Through the investigation of issues relevant to themselves and society, both locally and globally, pupils should have opportunities to:

- explore and clarify personal and social values in relation to the core concepts of diversity/interdependence; equality/justice; democracy/active participation; and
- engage in democratic processes that foster:
  - the right to be heard and the responsibility to listen to others;
  - the right to be treated fairly and the responsibility to treat others in a similar fashion; and
  - understanding of the consequences of individual and collective decisions and subsequent actions.

These core concepts emerge from, and are complementary to, the more detailed framework of values articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Because conflicting interpretations of these principles and values can occur in different contexts, and can give rise to personal and social dilemmas and disputes, it is proposed that an investigatory, values-clarification approach to contemporary issues is adopted. Issues for investigation will be suggested, from which teachers and pupils will have considerable freedom to select.

Pupils should have opportunities to explore, in the context of home/school, the local community/Northern Ireland and the global community, issues which highlight the following concepts:

Diversity/Interdependence:
----------------------------

(the concept that society is comprised of diverse groups and benefits when people have a sense of belonging, a respect for others and an understanding of the importance of co-operative activity). This will involve exploration of issues relating to community identity, customs, traditions and festivals, prejudice and discrimination, symbolism, conflict and reconciliation, the common good, social and civic responsibilities and public/community service.

#### Equality/justice:

(the concept that all should be treated alike, regardless of difference). This will involve exploration of issues relating to human dignity, human rights and responsibilities, equality, inclusion, stewardship of the environment and sustainable development.

#### Democracy/Active Participation:

(the concept that government receives its power from the mandate of its citizens and that democracies function by virtue of the active engagement of people at all levels of civic society). This will involve exploration of issues relating to authority and consent, participation, lobbying, voting, pressure groups, influence of the media, rules and the law.

### 3.4 Employability

#### 3.4.1 Rationale for a programme for Education for Employability at Key Stages 3 and 4

Education has a key role to play in preparing young people in Northern Ireland to cope effectively with the challenges of a new economic order, characterised by the information and communications revolution and global competition. The imperative of enhanced education for employability in the Northern Ireland Curriculum is highlighted in the Department of Economic Development's *Strategy 2010*, which articulates a vision for the Northern Ireland economy as *a fast growing, competitive, innovative, knowledge-based economy where there are plentiful opportunities and a population equipped to grasp them*. Pupils themselves, through the CCEA Cohort Study, point to the need to make learning more relevant to their future lives. Employability, therefore, should be regarded as central to the curriculum, just as work is central to most people's lives.

#### 3.4.2 Proposals in relation to Education for Employability at Key Stages 3 and 4

Education for employability, as defined through the three objectives set out below, will be addressed not only through subjects but also as part of the whole curriculum. Potential subject contributions to enhance employability will be clearly identified as part of the review of subjects in Phase 2 of the Review.

In addition to cross-curricular provision, it is proposed that there should be specific provision for education for employability at Key Stages 3 and 4.

*At Key Stages 1 and 2, education for employability will be catered for within Personal Development under the theme of "Living in the Local and Wider Community".*

### 3.4.3 Aim of Employability

The aim of education for employability is to ensure that all young people develop personal qualities, skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes which will give them a strong foundation for lifelong learning, work and citizenship in a rapidly changing economic environment.

### 3.4.4 Objectives

Education for Employability comprises three objectives:

- Work in the Global Economy;
- Career Management;
- Skills and Qualities for Work.

#### **Work in the Global Economy**

This objective focuses on developing a critical understanding of how and why the world of work is changing, including:

- the impact of global interdependence and technology on the pace of economic change and the on the nature and patterns of employment;
- the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers and the impact of key structures, organisations and regulations (such as the European Union);
- efficient management of personal, financial and environmental resources.

#### **Career Management**

This objective focuses on developing the knowledge and understanding, skills and qualities which pupils will need to deploy in the management of their careers. The key elements are:

- self-awareness – the ability to examine individual strengths in relation to employment opportunities, personal development and career enhancement;
- careers exploration – learning about career opportunities and developing the skills to research, analyse and evaluate options;
- career planning – the process of deploying the knowledge, understanding and skills to make informed choices about education options and career opportunities.

## **Skills and Qualities for Work**

The main objective of this dimension is to encourage pupils to develop the skills and qualities which they will need for work. In contexts relevant to employability, pupils should have opportunities to practice and refine the generic skills (personal skills, interpersonal skills, physical skills, thinking skills, learning skills, and ICT skills) and to gain experience and confidence in integrating and transferring these to new situations.

## **Review Objective 4: Improve balance, coherence and flexibility at each Key Stage**

### **4 Rationale for changes to the Area of Study Framework**

The current Curriculum Framework at Key Stages 1 and 2 comprises,

- 4 Cross-curricular Themes, (EMU, Cultural Heritage, Health Education and IT)
- Religious Education;
- five Areas of Study (within which specific Programmes of Study are listed).

<b>Areas of Study</b>	<b>Subjects</b>
English	English
Mathematics	Mathematics
Science and Technology	Science and Technology
Environment and Society	Geography & History
Creative and Expressive	Art & design, Music and PE

**At Key Stage 3** the curriculum framework is similar to that at Key Stages 1 and 2, with:

- one additional Area of Study (Languages); and
- two additional Cross-curricular Themes (Careers Education and Economic Awareness).

**At Key Stage 4** the curriculum framework (including the Cross-curricular Themes), continues to apply, with statutory requirements within each Area of Study specified in terms of either:

- specific subjects which must be studied; or
- a choice of courses from a defined list of contributory subjects.

The Area of Study Framework was devised as a mechanism for ensuring breadth and balance of educational experience. It is acknowledged that the statutory subjects within the areas of study contribute breadth and that the Framework provides for some broad aspects of commonality between the subjects within each area.

All Key Stage Groups, however, were of the view that, in practice, the current Area of Study Framework:

- is used mainly as a device for ensuring breadth at Key Stage 4;
- has made little impact, in terms of ensuring greater coherence in planning across the subjects listed within each Area of Study;
- does not ensure a consistent balance of time allocation across the Areas;

- has, in some cases, created artificial barriers between subjects listed under different Areas of Study, where potential for greater coherence exists, for example, *between English and history, between geography and science, or between art and design and technology and design.*

In addition, important aspects of education, such as personal, social, emotional and health education (PSHEE) or education for citizenship, are missing from the Framework.

It is proposed that the current curriculum framework of six Areas of Study and six Educational (cross-curricular) Themes is replaced by

- 1 The revised aim;
- 2 The revised objectives;
- 3 The generic skills framework; and
- 4 by a developmental Framework that becomes progressively more detailed through the Key Stages, to reflect the increased elaboration of what is being learned and the changing organisation of the learning process.

**4.1** It is proposed that:, at **Key Stage 1:** the curriculum is prescribed within five areas, with the emphasis on an **integrated** approach within and across the areas of:

1. Literacy;
2. Numeracy;
3. Creativity;
4. Personal Development; and
5. The World About Us.

The Key Stage 1 curriculum would focus mainly on the development of skills. In the earliest years the focus should clearly be on oracy, practical mathematics, personal development and learning through structured play.

**4.2** It is proposed that, at **Key Stage 2:** the curriculum is prescribed within the same five areas as at Key Stage 1, but with **identifiable strands** within two of the five areas that relate to the emerging subject disciplines as follows:

- Creativity – reflecting aspects of Art and Design, Music and Physical Education
- The World About Us – reflecting aspects of Science and Technology, Geography and History.

The curriculum within all five areas would be defined in terms of reduced core content and options, with greater emphasis on skills and topics that encourage linkages within and across the areas.

**4.3** It is proposed that, at **Key Stage 3**: the curriculum is prescribed in terms of **subject programmes of study**, as at present (with the addition of programmes relating to Personal Development, Citizenship and Employability), and that the programmes of study be reviewed on the basis of the percentage time allocation set out at 4.3.2. It is also proposed that this percentage time allocation forms the basis of school timetable allocation.

Curriculum coherence would be strengthened by linkages based on

- the generic framework of skills; and
- common issues which might be investigated from a range of subject perspectives.

**4.4** At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is influenced both by statutory provision and by the regulation of the qualifications offered to young people at 16.

It is proposed that the Council consults with all of the stakeholders as to how the relationship between those twin methods of control should be treated in the context of this review.

## **4.1 Details of Key Stage 1 Proposals**

### **4.1.1 Rationale for changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 1**

The Working Group considered that, during Key Stage 1, all children should have opportunities to develop self-esteem, confidence in themselves as learners and the dispositions and motivation to learn. Enjoyment of their early learning experience, and progress at a developmentally appropriate pace, are crucial to achieving these goals. The approach to teaching and learning advocated by the working group is based on research into good early years practice carried out by Professor Lilian Katz, Professor Christine Pascal, Professor Ferre Laevers and others. This research stresses the importance of the social and emotional development of the child and the crucial need to develop, through an enjoyable, creative and failure-free experience, children's dispositions to learn. This type of practice is exemplified in the world-renowned practice in Reggio Emilia, Northern Italy. It is also widely reflected in many European countries, notably Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Hungary as well as Japan, Korea and New Zealand, where children are not introduced to the formal teaching of reading, writing and mathematics until they are considered developmentally ready, at about six years of age. Research indicates that children who are introduced to **formal** reading and writing at this later age not only catch up with, but within about 10–12 weeks, begin to outpace, children who have begun formal reading at the age of four, with significantly less incidence of failure.

Accordingly, the working group advises that the curriculum for Year 1 should build on the experiences that children will have had in a range of pre-school settings, where children learn through play and other planned activities, are given a considerable degree of autonomy and have opportunities to make decisions.

#### **4.1.2 Key Stage 1 Curriculum Proposals**

It is proposed that:

The Curriculum is organised within five integrated Curriculum Areas:  
Literacy;  
Numeracy;  
Creativity;  
Personal Development;  
The World About Us.

#### **4.1.3 Recommendations to the Phase 2 Review Group for Key Stage 1**

The Key Stage 1 Framework group recommends that the generic skills framework for Key Stage 1 becomes the focus for promoting the development of skills across the curricular areas. The programmes of study for the curricular areas should be referenced to these generic skills, with children being given specific opportunities to develop ICT skills. The approach to teaching and learning, particularly in Year 1, should be much less formal, and much less content based, than is the case at present. Much more emphasis should be placed on:

- the personal, social and emotional development of the children;
- the importance of learning through well structured play;
- the development of skills in oral language;
- the development of physical skills;
- creativity through the arts and the environment.

Children should also be given opportunities to make choices and decisions and teachers should have greater latitude to encourage creativity and to follow the interests of children.

#### **Personal Development**

The Key Stage Working Group recommends that a programme for Personal Development should be a statutory entitlement for all children in Key Stage 1. The programme of study should outline ways in which children's personal and social development, attention span, listening and memory skills can be nurtured through the use of, for example, stories, circle time, drama, music, and art and design.

## **Literacy**

While the present programme of study for English reflects much of what should take place across Key Stage 1, the Key Stage Working Group recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review, there should be a shift away from formal teaching of reading and writing, particularly in Year 1, towards an emphasis upon the development of oral language skills and the dispositions to read and to write. The revised programme of study should include more specific information about how literacy should be promoted in Year 1 and, where appropriate, continue into Year 2, with children learning in an informal environment in which literacy skills can be nurtured. The literacy programme for Year 1 should focus on the promotion of: oracy, shared reading; and emergent writing, moving towards independent writing. The revised programme of study should also include information as to how, in subsequent years, the oracy programme should develop and how a structured reading scheme might be introduced in Year 2.

One implication for the proposed change in approach advocated for Year 1 is that schools will need to be adequately resourced for shared reading, which requires children having access to a wide range of books.

## **Numeracy**

While the Key Stage Working Group felt that the content of the programme of study for maths should remain generally unchanged, it recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review, the important key messages about mathematics (contained in pages 1 & 2 of the current programme of study), should be more strongly emphasised. The revised programme of study should emphasise that in Year 1 children should be involved in practical activities, giving them opportunities to talk about their work and encouraging them to develop their own personal methods of recording. The importance of children continuing to learn through practical activities, through talking about their work should be emphasised, with much more importance being given to promoting skills in mental mathematics.

## **The World Around Us**

The Key Stage Working Group recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review, this curricular area should bring together the skills of science and technology, geography and history. It is proposed that only the skills are statutory but that elements of the present programmes of study are outlined as suggested topics which can be used by teachers as a vehicle for developing skills. These topics should be skills referenced and might also include links with other curricular areas, for example, Personal Development and Creativity.

Teachers would, therefore, have freedom to:

- continue to draw upon the content in the present programmes of study for science and technology, history and geography;
- use the non-statutory topics developed by CCEA; or
- follow the particular interests of the children.

### **Creativity**

The Key Stage Working Group recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review, the curricular areas, art and design, music, physical education and drama, should be integrated. The content in the present programmes of study should form the basis of the integrated programme. The focus of this curricular area should be on the development of individual creativity in order to develop children's self-confidence and self-esteem.

#### **4.1.4 Implications arising from the Key Stage 1 Proposals**

##### **Parental expectations**

Prior to any change in approach in Year 1, parents need to be made aware that the proposed change in approach will not inhibit their children's progress in, for example, reading and writing. Rather it will allow children to progress at their own pace, to develop dispositions to read and write, and to become confident learners. It should provide a smooth transition from pre-school education to primary education.

##### **Pre and In-service training**

It is recommended that a programme of in-service training should be planned and implemented prior to the revised curriculum becoming statutory. Initially the training should be for Year 1 teachers and should focus on:

- shared reading and emergent/independent writing;
- how structured play can be planned so that it is a vehicle for learning;
- practical mathematics, children talking about their work and developing their own methods of recording;
- how skills in Personal, Social and Emotional Education can be developed; and
- managing the curriculum in the classroom.

The more informal approach, particularly in literacy, will need to be explained to Principals and Key Stage Co-ordinators so that they will be able to respond to queries from parents as well as plan programmes of learning for other years, building on the work in the early years. Training will also be required for classroom assistants who will need to know about any change of approach in the Year 1 classroom. Pre-service trainers will need to take account of any changes to the curriculum and its implementation when planning their programmes for students.

## **4.2 Details of Key Stage 2 Proposals**

### **4.2.1 Rationale for changes to the Key Stage 2 Curriculum**

The Working Group considered that the Key Stage 2 curriculum:

- is content-heavy and over prescriptive, which limits the time available for practical activities;
- is assessment-heavy, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2 with the transfer test and end of Key Stage assessment, which impacts strongly on curriculum breadth and balance in Years 6 and 7;
- leads to a narrow and utilitarian view among pupils of what is important.

These views are supported by the findings from monitoring and from the cohort study research conducted by NFER into teachers and pupils' views of the curriculum at the end of Key Stage 2.

### **4.2.2 Proposals for Key Stage 2**

It is proposed that:

The Key Stage 2 Framework should comprise, as at Key Stage 1, five statutory curricular areas, incorporating the generic skills framework, as follows:

- Personal Development
- Literacy
- Numeracy;
- Creativity (incorporating strands from art and design, music, physical education and drama)
- The World Around Us (incorporating strands from science and technology, geography, history).

### 4.2.3 Recommendations to the Phase 2 Review Group for Key Stage 2

In addition, the Working Group recommends that, as part of Phase 2 of the Review:

- Opportunities to develop 2<sup>nd</sup> language provision in primary schools should be made available over time through pilot projects with a view to making this an entitlement for all Key Stage 2 children at some time in the future.
- ICT should stand on its own as a set of skills but should also be integrated clearly into the subjects. Exemplar materials should be developed to provide guidance for teachers and a clear line of development should be produced to show progression;
- The Key Stage 2 Subject Review Groups should:
  - identify for each subject the skills which pupils are entitled to develop;
  - produce a line of development illustrating progression within the skills;
  - specify the essential statutory core content for each subject;
  - suggest enhanced content or topics which would be non-statutory;
  - improve breadth and balance across the curriculum by reducing the content of subjects to allow more time for music, art and design, physical education, ICT and for practical activities.

The Key Stage 2 Group also recommends that, as part of Phase 3 of the Review, the over assessment of a narrow range of subjects should be addressed.

#### **Personal Development**

The Key Stage Working Group recommends that a programme for Personal Development should be a statutory entitlement for all children in Key Stage 2. In addition to personal, social and emotional development, this programme should address aspects of health education currently contained within the programme of study for science.

#### **Literacy**

While the present programme of study for English reflects much of what should take place across Key Stage 2, the Key Stage Working Group recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review, there should be a more specific emphasis on the development of literacy across the curriculum.

## **Numeracy**

While the Key Stage 2 Working Group considered that the content of the programme of study for maths should remain generally unchanged, it recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review, there should be more specific emphasis on the development of numeracy across the curriculum.

## **The World Around Us (Science and Technology, Geography and History)**

The Key Stage 2 Working Group recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review, Science and Technology, geography and history should be set out as 3 strands within which:

- skills common to each subject should be highlighted and subject-specific skills identified;
- essential core content for each subject should be specified;
- topics to link the 3 strands should be identified, together with opportunities to make links with other curricular areas.

## **Creativity (Art and Design, Music, Physical Education and Drama)**

The Key Stage 2 Working Group recommends that:

- art and design, music, physical education and drama should be set out as 4 strands within the area of “Creativity”;
- topics should be identified which incorporate and link all four elements, together with opportunities to make links with other curricular areas;
- this area of the curriculum should be given greater emphasis.

### **4.2.4 Support Implications of the Key Stage 2 Proposals**

Non-statutory guidance, in the form of schemes of work, should be produced to support teachers. This should set out the Skills, Programme of Study, Expected Learning Outcomes, Suggested Activities and Resources. Links to other curricular areas should be exemplified. These schemes of work should be disseminated to schools through INSET.

## 4.3 Details of Key Stage 3 Proposals

### 4.3.1 Rationale for changes to the Curriculum at Key Stage 3

The Working Group, in response to research evidence arising from the Cohort Study, considered that:

- the curriculum at Key Stage 3 lacks perceived relevance for many pupils;
- insufficient breadth and inappropriate challenge results in diminishing enjoyment and progressive disengagement for some pupils, including the most able, as they progress through the key stage;
- insufficient coherence means that pupils have a segmented view of curriculum purpose;
- the narrow focus of assessment means that the curriculum conveys to pupils a limited and utilitarian view of what is important;
- pupils do not draw connections between subjects or transfer knowledge and skills across disciplines;
- low expectation of pupils' previous learning and attainment often exists;
- insufficient differentiation is provided;
- pupils are often unable to track progression within subjects.

The Working Group acknowledged that these were complex issues, which related as much to whole school planning and to effective teaching and learning as to curriculum content. The Cohort Study research has also highlighted significant variations in the curriculum offered to Key Stage 3 pupils in Northern Ireland schools, leading the NFER researchers to conclude that *there appears to be no such thing as the Northern Ireland Curriculum*. Rather there are about six different types of curricula, each laying heavy emphasis on particular subjects.

### 4.3.2 Proposals for Key Stage 3 Curriculum

As a response to this imbalance, it is proposed that the following percentage times are used in Phase 2 as a basis for the review of subject, content and subsequent timetable allocation.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>%</b>
English	10
Mathematics	10
Science	10
Technology and Design	5
History	5
Geography	5
Art and Design	5
Music	5
Physical Education	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
Modern Languages (1)	5
Modern Languages (2)	5
Religious Education	5
Home Economics	5
Personal Development	5
Citizenship	5
Employability	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Information and Communications Technology	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Drama	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/>
	100%

### 4.3.3 Recommendations to the Phase 2 Review Group

The Key Stage 3 Working Group recommends that, in Phase 2 of the Review:

- the percentage time allocation above is either made statutory or is very strongly recommended to schools in order to ensure a balanced entitlement at Key Stage 3;

- the generic skills framework becomes the focus for promoting the development of skills across the curricular areas;
- each subject should clearly identify its contribution to the generic skills framework to encourage teachers to perceive their subject as part of a wider educational agenda and subject content should be reduced to enable teachers to address the generic skills and issues of effective teaching and learning;
- the potential for overarching topics should be identified within the statutory orders to encourage coherence and a more collaborative approach between subject departments;
- ICT be integrated clearly into the subjects but should also have some discrete provision to ensure progression in the development of ICT skills.

#### **4.3.4 Implications of the Key Stage 3 Proposals**

Teachers will need time to come to terms with the wider demands of the generic skills framework and the possibility of collaborative work across disciplines; also awareness-raising and training in a range of effective teaching and learning strategies which may extend their existing repertoire. The successful implementation of the outcomes of the review will depend, to a large extent, on the support which is provided for schools. The following recommendations relate to support issues which can be addressed by CCEA. CCEA should:

- produce case-studies of effective timetable models which would exemplify good practice in addressing breadth and balance across the three years of the key stage;
- develop pilot projects, resources and guidelines on good practice in relation to Personal Development, Citizenship, Employability and ICT;
- identify links between subjects in relation to processes and content and develop exemplars of collaborative topic work and learning outcomes across subjects;
- collaborate with educational partners to identify and disseminate existing good practice and to ensure a consistent and coherent approach to interpreting and supporting implementation of the revised curriculum.

## **4.4 Key Stage 4 Issues for further consultation**

### **4.4.1 Rationale for greater flexibility at Key Stage 4**

The statutory curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been in place since 1990. The Area of Study framework, together with the six Educational (cross-curricular) Themes ensured that all pupils were given opportunities to follow a broad curriculum. However, there are some emerging factors which suggest that this is an opportune time to undertake a fundamental review of Key Stage 4.

From within the education sector, many principals of post-primary schools continue to argue for greater flexibility in the requirements, in order to allow pupils to follow programmes which are more suited to their individual abilities, aptitudes and aspirations. The implementation of the statutory curriculum is heavily influenced by the fact that GCSE is the main form of assessment and provides the basis of the School Performance Tables. The success of Part One GNVQ at Key Stage 4 suggests that qualifications other than GCSE with different models of assessment, including those that have greater emphasis on relevance and practical application, should be available.

Young people, as they reach Key Stage 4, need to be encouraged to use the knowledge, skills and understanding that they have gained in earlier Key Stages in order to take on new, and more adult, roles in the school and in the community. They also need to begin to take greater responsibility for their own decisions, whether these concern career options or are related to choices, with regard to a whole range of moral, health and spiritual issues.

From the business perspective, there is increasing pressure on education to respond dynamically to the challenges and opportunities arising from rapid developments in technology, the knowledge-based economy and the effects of global competitive markets.

### **4.4.2 Current and potential developments**

Provision for disapplication of aspects of the statutory curriculum for particular groups of pupils, to focus on work-related learning, is an experimental option on offer for schools from September 2000. The interim period, between September 2000 and the first change to the curriculum in September 2002, will be an opportunity for schools to undertake curriculum innovation focusing particularly on work-related learning.

From September 2000, significant changes to GCE A/AS and GNVQs, together with Key Skills, will be introduced. It is hoped that the range and sizes of qualifications available will be used to encourage young people working at advanced level to follow a broader curriculum. It is intended that the new qualifications framework for 14–19 year olds will promote parity of esteem across the three qualifications categories – general, vocationally-related and occupational.

Demand for breadth is likely to continue to be addressed, in the longer term, through some type of “overarching” certification for 18 year olds. Such certification would be used as a mechanism for encouraging students to broaden their studies Post-16. Equally, there may be an argument for a similar “overarching” certification at 16 to encourage breadth of studies at Key Stage 4.

#### **4.4.3 Issues for further consultation**

In view of the issues raised in this paper, the Council, rather than make detailed proposals, has decided to initiate a more fundamental and open debate about Key Stage 4. Views are being sought on the most appropriate provision for 14–16 year olds which takes account of a range of considerations, including the need to:

- make effective provision for skills, knowledge and personal qualities considered to be important for employability;
- ensure that young people do not close off possible career options;
- provide for progression through the 14–19 curriculum and beyond;
- balance what might be considered to be an essential entitlement with flexibility and choice;
- make adequate provision for important societal priorities, for example, citizenship or personal, social and health education.

CCEA proposes to take forward the debate on Key Stage 4 by:

- gathering views during consultation seminars to be held in May and June:
- holding discussions with a wide range of interest groups, including business and trade unions; and
- issuing a further short consultation paper in the autumn.

## 4.5 Proposals for a revised Access Statement

### 4.5.1 Rationale for changes to the current Access Statement

The Northern Ireland Curriculum is a common entitlement for all pupils. For pupils with Special Needs who are not exempted, an Access Statement provides teachers with discretionary powers to interpret curriculum specifications in accordance with the needs of individual pupils. The current access statement makes provision only for pupils with Special Educational Needs. It is proposed that the revised access statement is sufficiently inclusive and sufficiently flexible to meet the diverse needs of all pupils.

### 4.5.2 Proposed new Access Statement –

#### **Providing Equality of Opportunity for all Pupils**

The Northern Ireland Curriculum is the basis for planning a school curriculum that meets the diverse needs of all pupils. Schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for every pupil. Pupils bring to school different experiences, interests and strengths that will influence the way they learn. In planning to meet these diverse needs teachers need to:

- be aware of equal opportunities legislation that applies to Northern Ireland;
- take account of social and cultural backgrounds, gender, special educational needs, ethnic groupings and diverse linguistic backgrounds;
- ensure that all pupils feel secure, are able to contribute appropriately, and feel that their contribution is valued;
- help all pupils to appreciate and view positively differences in others, arising from whatever cause;
- identify and work to overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment in order to keep to a minimum the need for aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum to be dis-applied for a pupil.

#### **Access for Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

A number of pupils have particular learning and assessment requirements which if not addressed could create barriers to learning. These requirements are likely to arise as a consequence of a pupil having special educational needs. This access statement outlines how teachers can modify the Northern Ireland Curriculum programmes of study as necessary, to provide all pupils with relevant and challenging work at each key stage.

*“The term ‘Special Educational Needs’ is defined in the legislation as ‘a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made’. ‘Learning difficulty’ means that the child has significantly greater difficulty in*

*learning than the majority of children of his or her age, and/or a disability which hinders his or her use of everyday educational provision which is different from, or additional to, the provision made generally for children of comparable age". [paragraph 1.4 Code of Practice DENI 1998].*

In many cases the action necessary to respond to an individual's requirements for curriculum access will be met through greater differentiation of tasks and materials consistent with school based intervention, as set out in the SEN Code of Practice (DENI 1998).

The provision of opportunities for all pupils to experience success is vital in order for them to enjoy learning and develop their self-esteem. In order for pupils to acquire knowledge, and develop skills and understanding that suits their abilities, it may be necessary for teachers to:

- select materials and/or activities from an earlier key stage or in the case of more able or gifted pupils from a later key stage; or
- make extensive use of content from an earlier key stage.

It is important, that such material and/or activities are presented in an appropriate age and/or maturity related context and that teaching takes account of gaps in pupils' learning resulting from missed or interrupted schooling.

Curriculum planning and assessment for pupils with special educational needs must take account of the nature, extent and duration of the difficulty experienced by the pupil.

In planning to cater for individual needs teachers may need to:

- identify aspects of programmes of study and attainment targets that may present specific difficulties for individuals;
- plan appropriate amounts of time to allow pupils to complete tasks satisfactorily;
- provide a range of materials and resources that pupils can access through all the senses; sight, touch, sound, taste or smell;
- use text that pupils can read and understand;
- provide opportunities to mix, work and co-operate with their peers;
- provide access to appropriate non-visual or non-aural methods of communication;
- create opportunities for the development of skills in practical aspects by providing adapted, modified or alternative activities where appropriate;

- adapt tasks or environments;
- use a range of stimuli to make up for a lack of first hand experiences;
- provide opportunities for pupils to develop strengths in depth where they cannot meet the particular requirements across a programme of study;
- provide work related opportunities at appropriate transition points in the post primary phase.
- Teachers may also need to use:
  - ICT, other technological aids and taped materials;
  - visual and written materials in different formats, including modified print, symbol text and Braille;
  - alternative and augmentative communication, including signs and symbols;
  - translators, communicators and amanuenses;
  - other specialist aids and equipment.

Where appropriate, teachers should work closely with representatives of other agencies who may be supporting the pupil. Teachers should also be aware that the CCEA “Stepping Stones” provide support for pupils’ to access the programmes of study.

## **Review Objective 5: Develop assessment mechanisms which better match curriculum aims**

### **5.1 Rationale for Phase 3 of the Review**

CCEA's advice to the Minister on Curriculum Review (January 1999) recognised the many challenges and constraints which need to be addressed if all of the objectives of the Review are to be achieved. The Council is aware of the impact on the curriculum of current modes of assessment, in particular the Transfer Test. It is also conscious of the impact on curriculum priorities of School Improvement Targets for English and mathematics and the publication of results in School Prospectuses and Boards of Governors' Reports.

With regard to the importance of assessment for pupils, the Cohort Study reveals that many subjects, particularly those with a higher level of activity or practical application, are appealing and more fulfilling to students than more "academic" areas. Nevertheless, subjects are not accorded status in pupils' perceptions unless they are assessed by external tests.

These findings raise extremely important questions about the perceived value of areas of the curriculum which are not formally assessed. The Council is committed, through Review Objective 5, to developing advice in relation to assessment in order that it better matches the revised aims, objectives, values and skills of the curriculum. During Phase 3 Review (September 2002–March 2003), the Council will develop advice on assessment which will take into consideration the following issues which have been raised by Phase 1 Working Groups.

### **5.2 Assessment of Literacy, Numeracy and Key Skills**

Many Working Groups highlighted literacy and numeracy as the focus for raising attainment in relation to national targets. They felt that these were important cross-curricular issues. However, the fact that these skills are tested in end of Key Stage assessment only through English and Mathematics creates a perception that is at odds with the concept of cross-curricularity and the breadth of application which is encompassed within literacy and numeracy. The Key Stage Working Groups recommended that future consideration should be given to the development of Key Stage assessment based on the model used for the key skills. At Key Stage 3, assessment outcomes could be related to key skills at foundation level through a short external test and portfolio evidence gathered across a range of subjects. Such an approach would promote much of the desirable practice and outcomes related to balance and coherence at Key Stage 3. The existing CCEA IT accreditation scheme at Key Stage 3 could be used as a starting point for such development.

### **5.3 Possible Assessment of Citizenship and other areas**

The Working Group on citizenship considered that it was extremely important that some form of assessment, consistent with the programme's emphasis on active and experiential learning methodologies, should be made available to add value to this aspect of the curriculum. The Group suggested that CCEA, (perhaps in conjunction with other initiatives such as the Gulbenkian Citizenship Awards), should recognise and award pupil

achievement in relation to an active investigation of a local community, cross community or environmental issue. The Group also suggested that modules within CCEA's GCSE modular programme, Social and Environmental Studies, should be reviewed and where necessary, made consistent with the proposed Programme of Study for Citizenship. In Phase 3 of the Review, from September 2002, more detailed consideration will be given to the status of and possible modes of assessment of these and other proposed areas, such as Personal Development.

## **Review Objective 6: Develop Strategies to Manage Change**

### **6.1 Rationale for the better management of change**

The proposals arising from this review of the curriculum will be more effectively implemented if there is a well developed strategy for the management of the changes involved. Such a strategy must take account of the needs of schools. The Council, therefore, has recommended that:

- proposed new curriculum content is developed and evaluated through pilot projects that will allow teachers to test the appropriateness and manageability of proposals and to develop expertise and methodology;
- any new initiatives are introduced on a phased basis, in order to create time for the necessary piloting and for the development of support materials.

The Council will seek further views, during the forthcoming Phase 1 consultation, on the scope and nature of support materials required. It may be that, at different key stages, or in different subject areas, a variety of support will be needed, some to help teachers with planning, such as model schemes of work, and some for use with pupils.

The Council will endeavour to work with all the partners in education to manage and support the change process. The Council's Work Programme for 2000-01 includes plans to:

- complete the comprehensive review of the statutory curriculum over the two-year period from October 1999 to March 2001;
- consult, in partnership with the education and Library Boards, on proposals to amend the statutory curriculum as a result of the review;
- in partnership with the ELBs and Health Boards, develop and trial materials in relation to Personal Development in the primary and post-primary schools;
- in partnership with the University of Ulster and the ELBs, conduct a pilot project in relation to Citizenship in the post-primary sector;
- in partnership with the BELB, conduct a pilot project in relation to Early Years' Education;
- in partnership with DENI and the Esme Fairburn Foundation, extend the Cohort Study to Key Stage 4 (funding permitting).

The Council will also seek partnership and external funding to extend the range of the Council's curriculum research and development activities, and produce a five-year development programme for curriculum support materials arising from the review programmes and consultation.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Council wishes to thank the teachers who served on the Phase 1 Working Groups and the personnel nominated by CCMS, the Education and Library Boards, the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Teachers' Unions.

## REFERENCES

*Developing the Northern Ireland Curriculum to meet the needs of young people, society and the economy in the 21st century* (CCEA 1999).

*Values on Education in Northern Ireland*, Montgomery and Smith (UU 1997).

*Activating Children's Thinking Skills* (CCEA report 1996).

*EMU: The Initial Statutory Years*, Smith and Robinson (UU 1996).

*Towards a Culture of Tolerance, Education for Diversity* (DENI 1999).

*Strategy 2010* (Department of Economic Development 1999).

\*References to "*The Cohort Study*" relate to a four-year longitudinal study of the views of nearly 3,000 Key Stage 3 pupils (60 pupils have been followed through from Year 7).

•Two reports have been published to date and the final report is awaited:

*Real Curriculum at the end of Key Stage 2* (NFER 1999);

*Real Curriculum at the start of Key Stage 3* (NFER 1999);

*Real Curriculum at the end of Key Stage 3* (NFER 2000) (pending).