



*Rewarding Learning*

## Pathways

*towards a more coherent, enjoyable, motivating  
and relevant curriculum for young people aged  
11-14*

Summary of the Outcomes of the  
Consultation

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## INTRODUCTION

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2003 CCEA began a widespread consultation on proposals for the revised statutory curriculum and its assessment at Key Stage 3 for pupils aged 11 – 14. Despite the short timeframe of barely 3 months (necessitated by a Ministerial request to provide advice by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003), this was possibly CCEA's most comprehensive consultation ever.

During this period CCEA held briefing sessions with schools and educational partners, undertook 20 focus groups with stakeholders, and engaged the wider community through a series of media articles, interviews and an information leaflet. Consultation materials were made available in a wide range of formats and there were opportunities to submit views both in hard copy and on-line.

***When the consultation period closed at the end of November, CCEA had achieved its biggest ever consultation response.***

A total of 1571 questionnaires were returned. 467 were submitted on-line, and 1104 were received as hard copy. Of these, 638 were collective responses, 754 were individual, and 179 did not specify. A total of 11,783 views were represented.

Of responses from the school sector, 65.1% were from Secondary schools and 31.2% from Grammar schools.

***Overall there was general support for the broad thrust of the proposals. There were also significant reservations, accompanied by helpful constructive criticisms about matters of detail which has assisted the process of revision of the proposals.***

## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

The consultation questionnaire allowed respondents to comment on both the general and specific areas of the planned changes. A summary of the main areas of response is set out below.

### The Minimum Entitlement

*The proposals aim to replace the current very detailed Programmes of Study with a much reduced list of legal requirements. These are designed to state clearly the minimum to which every young person is entitled. Schools would be able to use this as a foundation on which to build a curriculum that meets the needs of their own pupils.*

The majority of respondents accepted this proposal, welcoming the increased pupil-centred approach and the opportunities this gave teachers to use their professional judgement regarding what to teach each pupil.

In some responses concerns were expressed about the availability of resources needed to implement change, while others felt that more flexibility might result in different learning experiences for pupils in different schools. Respondents also had concerns about the potential 'downgrading' of existing subjects.

### **Skills and Capabilities**

*CCEA proposes that the curriculum should allow young people the opportunity to develop the skills and attitudes which will help them succeed in their future lives.*

There was broad support for the increased emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities and general agreement that the skills highlighted in the consultation were appropriate. More information, guidance and exemplar materials were requested.

Following the extensive feedback received, CCEA will now take more time to address matters such as the balance of skills and knowledge, the progression to GCSE and KS4, assessment of skills and resource issues such as time and training.

### **Learning for Life and Work**

*Earlier consultation with teachers, employers and the wider community has highlighted the need for greater priority to be given to areas such as citizenship, employability and personal development which were group together as a distinct learning area – Learning for Life and Work.*

There was general support for the introduction of the Learning for Life and Work area. Respondents generally felt that education was fundamentally about preparing young people for later life.

The format for Learning for Life and Work also gained majority support, although some respondents felt that insufficient prominence had been given to Home Economics and that it should be a separate strand within Life Learning and Work.

Some respondents did express the view that Learning for Life and Work should be an integral part of every course and not a separate area. A minority also suggested that the content included in the proposals was more suitable for Key Stage 4 pupils not KS3.

More detail about the content of the Learning areas and information on the proposed training and resources was requested. In response to the feedback

CCEA will provide more detailed information about approaches to Learning for Life and Work. CCEA also intends to work with pilot schools to provide helpful ideas in a number of curriculum management issues.

## **General Learning Areas**

*The proposal that there should be 8 general learning areas found widespread support.*

Many teachers expressed concerns across all subject areas about a possible loss of content and knowledge. CCEA will be working to reassure teachers that the minimum entitlement gives schools the flexibility to develop a full curriculum that meets the needs of their pupils.

## **Flexibility to devise appropriate courses for pupils**

The great majority of schools felt they would be able to devise courses that are appropriate for their pupils. The pupil-centred approach was lauded, as was the autonomy given to teachers. CCEA was asked to give attention to any possible lack of standardisation between schools and the potential to further widen the gap between academic and non-academic pupils.

## **A Sound Foundation for Key Stage 4 and GCSE?**

By comparison most respondents felt that the minimum entitlement in itself would not provide an adequate grounding for further study at KS4 and GCSE. Lack of clarity over the purpose of the **minimum** entitlement (which would be added to by schools as they consider appropriate) may have coloured the response to this question. Many felt that the shape of the revised Key Stage 4 curriculum needs clarified for continuity if the Key Stage 3 proposals are to be implemented.

Based on the feedback received, CCEA will be providing more detail, guidance and resources across the Learning Areas to support the introduction of the new curriculum and to ensure that it provides adequate preparation for Key Stage 4.

## **Assessment at Key Stage 3**

*CCEA has proposed replacing the current system of Key Stage 3 tests in English, Maths and Science by a well-supported system of teacher assessment covering a broader range of subjects, skills and competencies. The aim is to move from assessment of learning to a position where we use assessment to support learning.*

Although there is little support for the existing system of Key Stage 3 testing, this area of the proposals did not gain majority support, although many did comment

that the features of the design and aims of the assessment proposals are a continuation of the good practice currently undertaken in schools.

The impact of computer based assessment on the standardisation and monitoring of assessment was welcomed in theory. There was scepticism of its feasibility in practice.

Encouraging parental involvement in the assessment process was welcomed by the respondents who agreed that parents have a right to information such as the provision of class, school and Northern Ireland averages. Many felt, however, that this was another method of league tables and that unfair comparisons may be drawn especially between grammar and non-grammar schools.

The plan to moderate assessments on a 3 yearly cycle was welcomed by some respondents for the consistency and standardisation it will ensure, while others felt that annual moderation would provide more consistency. Again, the possible extra burden and workload for teachers was commented upon.

Many respondents felt that the new assessment proposals would provide a more rounded picture of pupils and would provide a consistently meaningful account for parents.

The proposal for a voluntary scheme of accreditation was accepted provided the scheme remained voluntary and did not become compulsory.

CCEA will undertake wide-spread piloting of the assessment proposals, some of which is already under way and will provide further information and reassurance on the many concerns schools and colleges hold over manageability and workload. It is not expected that the final form which the proposals will take will be fully settled until their workability is demonstrated through piloting.

### **Proposals for implementation**

*It is proposed that the implementation of the revised curriculum will be carried out in a phased manner over a number of years from September 2005. In advance of this a number of schools will pilot a range of approaches to timetabling and to teaching and learning in citizenship, employability, personal development and new assessment procedures. Best practice from these pilots will be used to inform training in the wider implementation of the new arrangements.*

The majority of respondents supported the proposals for implementation, although many questioned if the timescale proposed was adequate.

The main issues raised were resources, teacher training and changes for school management. The co-ordination and management of cross-curricular assessment was also concern for respondents.

## **Feedback from Focus Groups**

20 focus groups were held during October-November 2003. Focus group participants ranged from subject teachers, Education and Library Board Officers, Employers, Arts groups, parents, and other interested stakeholders.

The majority of focus group participants supported the rationale of the proposals. In particular there was support for the introduction of Learning for Life and Work and the increased emphasis on skills. Two focus groups provided very differing views on assessment, with one in agreement and one not. A concern held by both was adequate preparation time for the beginning of implementation in 2005.

The main issues raised by most of the other focus groups were in relation to the detail within each of the subject strands, in particular concerns about loss of content and progression to Key Stage 4 and also issues in relation to implementation, training, support and school management,.

## **What has happened since the end of consultation?**

The views of focus groups, together with the quantitative and qualitative views of other respondents, have been closely analysed and have been used by 'revision' groups to improve the detailed proposals. Small groups of teachers who were constructively critical have helped to revise the detail of the proposals for further consideration by the CCEA Council and the Department of Education.

After detailed consideration of the issues raised in the consultation report, the CCEA Council formulated its advice, which was forwarded to the Minister by 31<sup>st</sup> December as requested.

## **What will happen next?**

The Minister will consider the detail of the proposals, including revisions forwarded by CCEA based on feedback during the consultation. The Minister will then respond to CCEA with final decisions including those affecting implementation and timescale. These will be made known to schools as soon as possible.

Meanwhile 10 post-primary schools have agreed to work on different aspects of the proposals. CCEA will work with these schools to develop case studies and materials. In addition, development groups will be set up in each area of the curriculum to begin to develop sample teaching plans across the breadth of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. This work will supplement development work and pilot projects already under way in Personal Development, Local and Global Citizenship and Education for Employability.

Full details of all of these activities will be available on the CCEA website:  
[www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)