

**23 April 2014****Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, STANDARDS &  
INCLUSION****REVISIONS TO THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM IN ENGLAND****Purpose of the Report**

1. This is a follow up report to that received by Members at the September 2013 meeting of this Committee, which described Government proposals to the National Curriculum in England and associated changes in testing arrangements. This report for noting feeds back to Members the key features of the new Curriculum, and the views of the representatives of Nottinghamshire primary headteachers who have discussed their schools' response at the Primary Trust Board.

**Information and Advice**

2. There is a clear shift of emphasis in the National Curriculum materials for both the primary and secondary phases. The new Curriculum exclusively describes what is to be taught; there is a deliberate silence on methodology and pedagogy. Teachers are not instructed or advised on how the Curriculum is to be taught. This development is in line with a shift of emphasis in the approach of Ofsted. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Michael Wilshaw, has made clear that there are no longer to be prescriptions about which styles of teaching and learning work best. For example, for several years, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) have overtly favoured 'active' learning where pupils are expected to participate in lessons through group work where they are meant to make personal and group responses to some kind of challenge set by their teacher. 'Passive' learning, where a teacher 'dominates' in the classroom, was less likely to receive a good or better rating for the quality of teaching judgement. HMI are now expected to judge whether learning has taken place, whatever teaching methods are used. This approach is strongly commended in the new National Curriculum. The new Curriculum, therefore, sets out much shorter programmes of study, with emphasis upon content.
3. A notable emphasis is placed within the documentation of Government upon the shift of school improvement away from either Government itself or local authority leadership to school-led improvement, or 'system leadership'. The documentation emphasises that schools are invited to seek improvement through alliances with other schools, particularly the 345 'Teaching Schools' which are being given direct Government funding to lead on improvement. A further £2 million has been allocated nationally to help Teaching Schools to support schools in their alliances and beyond to plan for the National Curriculum changes. There is no funding for local authorities. The role of headteachers

as national and local leaders of education (NLEs and LLEs) is highlighted. Nottinghamshire has been at the forefront of promoting this partnership approach to school improvement in recent years. The County has six Teaching Schools, more than any other local authority in the East Midlands. The early formation of the Raising Achievements Networks (RANs) in Nottinghamshire has anticipated effectively this switch to system leadership. This was because there was locally a recognition that the capacity and expertise to provide support to schools which most needed it was, rightly, sited within schools themselves. The primary headteachers broadly welcomed this approach and accept that learning alliances, including limited companies such as those in Mansfield and Rushcliffe locally, form an important part of the future development of the system. However, primary headteachers continue to value the role of the Local Authority as the system enters a period of further transition.

4. The new Curriculum stresses subject knowledge and focuses priority upon English, mathematics, science and computing. In mathematics, the Curriculum sets out high age-related expectations, which openly reflect those demanded in 'high performing jurisdictions' such as Singapore and Massachusetts. For example, children are expected to know multiplication tables up to 12 times 12 by the end of Year 4 (age 9 years). In English, there is much greater emphasis on grammar, spelling and punctuation, with higher expectation upon spelling accuracy at an earlier age. Primary headteachers have broadly welcomed these changes. However, there was some concern expressed about how attainment was to be measured between key stages now that attainment targets are to be removed. Additionally, headteachers were concerned that some of the Department for Education (DfE) support and audit tools, set out in the documentation, were not yet fully operative online. The localised approach to funding from Government is, however, coming into operation. For example, the Rushcliffe Learning Alliance, a limited company now comprising most of the primary schools in Rushcliffe, has been awarded £26,000 to promote understanding of the new Curriculum. The primary headteachers of the Education Board have yet to take advantage of support and training opportunities provided by the National College for School Leadership, which is based in Nottingham. However, they expected they would do so. They did plan to attend the Curriculum Conference being provided by the Education Improvement Service (EIS) of the Local Authority.
5. The new Curriculum has changes in science which, again, reflect the greater precision associated with the teaching of the subject at all levels in high-performing jurisdictions, such as Singapore and Shanghai. In computing, a new and much-emphasised development involves the introduction of coding. Pupils at Key Stage 3 (age 11-14 years) will be taught how to use a range of programming languages. Government regards the lack of such teaching to be a serious weakness of the currently required learning in the Information Technology (IT) Curriculum. A new Master Computer Teachers (MCT) Programme is to be launched to train teachers in the new requirements of the Computing Curriculum.
6. In other subjects there is a return to emphases which many would regard as 'traditional'. For example, in history, there will be a requirement to teach chronologically across both Key Stages 2 and 3, rather than choose periods of particular interest. In geography, there will be greater emphasis upon location knowledge and field work. All primary schools will be required to teach a modern foreign language at Key Stage 2 (age 7-11 years) and there will be a requirement to study foreign literature at Key Stage 3 (age 11-

14 years), where there will also be greater emphasis on the accuracy of grammar and vocabulary. In design and technology, there is a new requirement to teach cooking to all pupils at Key Stage 3 and a requirement to teach electronics at the same stage. In music, there will be greater emphasis upon both music-making at all levels and greater discrimination expected from pupils in their response to listening to the music of others. In physical education and sport, there is particular emphasis upon being physically active and strong support for competitive sport. Dance is a requirement for the first time at Key Stage 3. The links between school and community and club sports are to be encouraged.

7. Government has chosen to place emphasis in the new Curriculum upon citizenship. This will include a greater focus on children and young people understanding the political systems and how democracy works, particularly in the United Kingdom. It will, for the first time, be a requirement that all children be provided with the opportunity to perform voluntary work in their community. All secondary schools will be required to teach personal financial education.
8. The timetable for the introduction of the new National Curriculum is as follows:
  - September 2014: the first teaching of National Curriculum except for Years 2 and 6 for English, mathematics and science and Key Stage 4 (age 14-16 years) for English, mathematics and science
  - May 2015: the final Key Stage 2 tests based on the previous Curriculum
  - September 2015: the first teaching of new GCSEs in English language, English literature, mathematics and science
  - May 2016: the first new stage Key Stage 2 tests in English, mathematics and science
  - Summer 2017: the first examinations of new GCSEs in English language, English literature, mathematics and science.
9. Religious Education continues to be a statutory requirement in all 4 Key Stages and in school sixth forms. Sex and relationships education is a requirement in Key Stages 3 and 4, all as at present.
10. As explained in the previous report to this Committee in September 2013, the Education Improvement Service is seeking to coordinate support across the various partnerships locally to ensure the new programmes for study are implemented appropriately. This support continues to be highly valued by primary headteachers and their staff.
11. **Appendix 1** of this report consists of a series of hyperlinks which may be helpful to Members who wish to view the new Curriculum in more detail.

### **Other Options Considered**

12. This is a report to summarise to Members the final version of the new National Curriculum and report back the response of representatives of primary headteachers to these changes. No other option is appropriate.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

13. Members will wish to note the report so that they are aware of significant changes in the content of the National Curriculum and how its implementation is being supported.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

15. There are no immediate financial implications to the County Council as maintained schools remain funded and responsible for the planning and delivery of the National Curriculum.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

16. The Department for Education believes that the National Curriculum presents the essential knowledge that pupils require in order to become responsible citizens. It aims to ensure that all pupils in maintained schools learn to appreciate and understand human creativity and achievement.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the changed content of the National Curriculum and the timetable for its introduction into schools be noted.

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### **Constitutional Comments**

17. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

### **Financial Comments (KLA 25/02/14)**

18. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

DfE webpages on National Curriculum Consultation

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum2014/>

Proposed revisions to the National Curriculum in England – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 16 September 2013

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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