Preparing for the new curriculum
Collected articles to support schools
This booklet is intended for sharing with colleagues who are perhaps less familiar with resources online, Twitter, blogs, etc. Hopefully, it will broaden the reach of some of the free resources available on the www.primarycurriculum.me.uk website, and may well support some schools in moving towards the new curriculum.

It consists of articles drawn from my blog at http://michaelt1979.wordpress.com/ about the new curriculum and its impact, as well as information about the primary curriculum website. Please do share it in electronic or printed form as widely as you like – but please do keep the booklet as a whole, with its copyright information attached.

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This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Tables on pages 9 and 10 are not included in this licence, and are re-printed under the Open Government Licence.
Five Steps to introducing the new Primary Curriculum

As schools begin to consider how they will manage the transition to the new curriculum, I’m offering 5 suggested steps to guide you through making the changes without throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I may, in the coming weeks, expand on some of these with more detail in a separate blog for each stage, (and will add notes to that effect) but for now the outline:

1. Keep & Tweak

There is always plenty that can be retained from an existing good curriculum to suit the new curriculum. Indeed, despite some of the early hype, there are many whole units of work which will need hardly to be touched. For example, schools teaching topics on Ancient Egypt, Space, the Great Fire of London, volcanoes & earthquakes and Salvador Dalí, have already got plans in place that could easily be retained to suit the new objectives. While the curriculum may at first seem detailed, much of the foundation subject content is actually very brief.

Furthermore, there will be units in place which could easily be adapted for the new curriculum. Currently teaching the Victorians and sorry to see it disappear from the new curriculum? Could you adapt it to become a local history study, with a focus on the Victorian period? Or perhaps an extended chronological study comparing children’s lives in Victorian times with another period? Or inventions?

Also remember that many units could be moved around – or not! If you currently teach Space in Year 4, nobody can force you to move it to Year 5. The year-by-year programmes of study are suggested: the only statutory requirement is that you cover the programme of study by the end of the key stage.

The curriculum jigsaws may help you to get an overview of content to see how it fits with what you are already teaching. (www.primarycurriculum.me.uk/support)

2. Identify the key gaps and key changes

Once you’ve worked out what you can keep from your existing work (and which units you’re prepared to say goodbye to, to make room!) you will need to identify where the gaps are in your current provision in preparation for September. For example, very few schools will currently be teaching about a tenth-century non-European civilization at present, and evolution will be new to most primary schools. Some of these areas will be more difficult to plan and resource at the moment, but hopefully new materials will soon be published!

This is also a good stage at which to identify some of the key changes needed in subjects and units of work which might otherwise remain. For example, the demands of some work in mathematics (fractions!) and English (grammatical terms) are higher in the new curriculum, so schools would be wise to identify quickly where they need to adapt planning. Some aspects may also have teacher-training and Inset implications.

The “Changes to the Core Curriculum” documents at www.primarycurriculum.me.uk set out the key changes to English, Maths and Science for each year group, and may be useful for subject leaders and senior leadership teams to consider.
3. Organise your new curriculum

Some schools will find that a few minor changes in each year team will make a substantial leap towards the requirements of the new curriculum. However, in others you may find that some year groups are now overwhelmed with content, while others have been decimated by the aspects dropped from the curriculum. This change gives schools an opportunity to address any current imbalances in the curriculum and to identify opportunities for improvements that they might already have planned. For example, schools who currently teach a Romans topic might decide to move schemes of work around in their school to allow it to run alongside a Geography unit looking at a region of Italy, or to move Maths work about Roman numerals into one year (rather than the suggested repetition across years).

The www.primarycurriculum.me.uk website presents content by year group (core) and key stage (foundation) and so may help schools quickly to identify where links can be made.

4. Plan for Implementation

Despite the rush of central government to push through the new curriculum, not every change in school will need to be rushed through for September. Naturally schools will first want to focus on what will be taught during the autumn term. Significantly, changes to the implementation & assessment timetables mean that the new curriculum will not be statutory in Years 2 or 6 until September 2015. While obviously some changes may happen in these year groups sooner, the focus can be on the other year groups initially – perhaps particularly in Years 1 and 5, where students will be entering the last 5 terms before the new-style Key Stage 1/2 tests.

Also, some units may not be needed immediately, particularly where units of work are moving around or can be re-used. Perhaps a current Year 5 unit of work will be used in Year 3 in future. That wouldn’t preclude its use in both year groups in the immediate period, giving higher year teams an opportunity to build up towards new units of work. By prioritising in steps 2 and 3, schools can identify what changes need to be made immediately to be ready for the new academic year, and which can be phased in over the followings month (or even years in some cases!)

5. Assessment

The DfE has already made clear its intention that the new curriculum assessment arrangements within key stages should be led by schools and should not require the use of the current National Curriculum Levels systems. Schools may want to take the opportunity to expand existing procedures, or to bring in assessment schemes from outside.

Others may wish to adopt a more personalised scheme which closely links assessment outcomes to the curriculum of the school. This could include key objectives set for each year group, or across a phase, which are used to guide teacher assessment as well as pupil and parent feedback.

Further articles in the booklet cover the changes to assessment that have now been brought in by the government. Schools will want to consider how their plans match the statutory systems, and how they meet the ‘7 questions’ set out later in the booklet.
Headline Changes for the Primary Curriculum

Many schools will need to manage change in stages, focussing first on the major changes. After all, it is often these big areas of change which will require most work in schools when it comes to planning, resourcing and professional development. Some of this information may be a useful starting point for subject leaders. Inevitably a short blog post cannot cover everything, so I recommend looking at other resources for more detail, such as the core subject breakdowns at www.primarycurriculum.me.uk/support and foundation subject comparisons at curriculum2014.wordpress.com amongst others.

Not all foundation subjects are included here, as they require relatively little change (see other blogs online)

English

There are a couple of substantial changes of focus in the programmes of study which affect the two key stages in turn. Firstly, there is very clear and unequivocal expectation, particularly in KS1, that children will be taught to read using phonic approaches. The teaching order of some elements is set out quite clearly, and the focus of the reading strands is very much on decoding. This will not be that new to many schools, but certainly bears noting.

Similarly, in KS2, the focus on grammatical language and structures is substantially more notable than the 1999 curriculum, with far higher expectations of metalanguage. We can reasonably expect a greater emphasis on SPAG testing from 2016 onwards. I suspect the teacher assessment of Writing may become incidental.

Spelling patterns to be taught in each phase are clearly set out, and the expectations are high in this area.

Key things for schools to consider:
- Does the current programme for teaching spelling fit the new requirements?
- How does staff subject knowledge support the teaching of new grammar specification?

Mathematics

Although much has been made of changes in maths, much of it is a rearrangement of content, with data largely slimmed down, and some objectives moved down through the year groups to fill that gap. Most schools will already be aware of the expectation that tables (to 12×12) are learned by the end of Year 4.

Some of the most notable increases in expectations are in the area of fractions and decimals, with expectations by the end of KS1 including finding fractions of quantities, and those for the end of KS2 covering skills previously taught at Y7+ such as carrying out all 4 operations with fractions, and the ability to convert a fraction to a decimal. Some of this may require further mathematics development for staff, as may the introduction of formal algebra in Y6.

Calculation policies will also come under scrutiny as the balance changes. Again, most schools are now aware that calculators will not be required for the main KS2 tests. However, some of the more significant changes are in terms of expectations for methods. There is a clear expectation that formal written methods (column addition/subtraction, short & long multiplication/division) will be taught during KS2, and again we should expect assessments to reflect that.

Key things for schools to consider:
- Is there a need to review calculation policies to reflect the new curriculum?
- How well-equipped is the school for teaching the new expectations in fractions? (including teacher subject knowledge)
Science
The changes in Science are by far the least notable among the core subjects. Some new content is required, including the teaching of evolution in Year 6. Other than this, most content remains broadly similar, with minor changes of content between year groups and key stages. For more detail, see the core curriculum changes document at www.primarycurriculum.me.uk/support

Computing
This has been one of the most widely publicised and talked about changes, and so many schools are already beginning to prepare for the changes. As mentioned in the previous blog, the changes are not as overwhelming as they might first appear, but there is clearly a renewed emphasis on areas which we might previously have considered to be “control technology”, with an expectation that all students will be introduced to some form of programming in KS1 and KS2.

Expect a boom in sales of roamers, and for Scratch to become a staple unit of work in KS2.

Key things for schools to consider:
- How does the balance of control and applied ICT work need to be altered?
- What investment is needed in resources to support the new control requirements?

Design & Technology
After a radical first draft back in February, the final version of the D&T curriculum is actually not that different from what was previously in place. The main change for primary schools is the new statutory requirement for cooking to be included. Where schools don’t have full kitchen facilities that could present some real challenges.

Key things for schools to consider:
- What food-related units of work do we already have, and do they meet any of the new NC criteria?
- What cooking techniques can we tackle given the facilities in place?

Geography
Arguably, Geography is the subject where the programme of study is least recognisable in comparison to its previous form. There is a substantial re-balancing in favour of acquiring knowledge about places with clear guidance on the expected locations to be taught. For many schools they will already be covering many of these areas. However, some teams may need to consider a new unit covering an area of the Americas in KS2. There are also some more specific expectations about aspects of human and physical geography to be taught, which may need to be addressed in existing or new units of work, including elements such as trade links and land use.

Key things for schools to consider:
- Do existing units of work meet the requirements to study the UK and a non-European country (KS1) and the UK, Europe and the Americas (KS2)?
- How can existing units of work be adapted to incorporate new areas of knowledge, especially relating to physical and human geography?
History

Another of the widely discussed subjects, where change is perhaps not as daunting as it might first appear, particularly at KS1 where very little change is needed. The two main areas of the subject which schools have not likely to have covered in the past are the pre-Roman study (stone age, iron age, etc.), and the world study which must focus on one of three 10th Century societies (Benin, Mayan, or early Islamic). Schools which had previously taught the Aztecs as their world study will also need to address a change there.

Consideration will also need to be given to the extended chronology and local studies. Many schools will want to combine these with existing units of work on Tudors, Victorians or Britain since 1930 (which are no longer required at KS2), but others may need new units of work to cover these expectations.

Key things for schools to consider:

- Will units on Tudors/Victorians/WW2 be scrapped, or modified to match new local/extended study requirements?
- Where and how will pre-Roman and World civilizations be taught in KS2?

Languages

In lots of schools, MFL is already in place and will meet the new requirements. However, in schools where existing programmes rely on taster sessions, or a combination of languages, discussions will need to take place about how schools meet the requirement to “focus on enabling pupils to make substantial progress in one language.”

Key things for schools to consider:

- Do existing MFL plans allow for students to make substantial progress in one language?
Summary of Primary Assessment Changes

After 5 months of ruminating on the consultation responses, the DfE finally came up with a plan of sorts for primary assessment and accountability. It’s a bit of a dog’s breakfast. A wholesale change that’s ended up as piecemeal fiddling of the worst sort. The publication was actually relatively brief, but here is a summary of what I believe we found out:

Changes to Assessments

Reception

A new baseline assessment will be introduced from September 2015 becoming compulsory from 2016. There is no real detail about what this will entail, other than that it will take place in the first few weeks of the reception year. From September 2016, therefore, there will be no requirement to complete an EYFS profile for children. The EYFS framework will remain statutory.

Year 1

There is no change proposed to the phonics check.

Year 2 (end of KS1)

Judgements will continue to be made using teacher assessment. However, these are expected to be supported by results of externally-set (but internally-marked) tests in some areas. Scaled scores will be provided, with 100 being the expected outcome for the age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Teacher Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Anational Mathematics test will provide a scaled score</td>
<td>Assessment will be made against a selection of performance descriptors which describe different levels of outcome (i.e. a variation on current levels/sub-levels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Anational Reading test will provide a scaled score</td>
<td>To be informed by test results where available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Anational test in Spelling, Punctuation &amp; Grammar will provide a scaled score</td>
<td>A single descriptor will be published. Children be judged as either meeting the expected standard, or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking &amp; Listening</td>
<td>No test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>No test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no indication in the documentation about which, if any, of these results will have to be shared with parents.

More detail about the KS1 tests themselves has now been released and can be read in this blog: http://michaelt1979.wordpress.com/2014/03/31/new-ks1-tests-from-2016/

Year 3 – 5

No further assessments will be nationally prescribed.
Year 6 (end of KS2)

Both teacher assessment and external testing will be used following a similar model to the current framework.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>A national Mathematics test will provide a scaled score</td>
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<td>Assessment will be made against a selection of performance descriptors which describe different levels of outcome (i.e. a variation on current levels/sub-levels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>National sampling will continue, but not all schools/children will be involved each year</td>
<td>A single descriptor will be published. Children bejudged as either meeting the expected standard, or not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All aspects will be reported to parents (except Science sampling)

More detail about the KS2 tests themselves has now been released and can be read in this blog: http://michaelt1979.wordpress.com/2014/03/31/new-ks2-tests-from-2016/

Higher Ability Students

There is very little detail in the consultation about higher ability groups. Previous comments have suggested that only one set of tests will be used in KS2, with no extension (level 6) papers. The only mention in the latest release is that schools will be required to publish “the percentage of pupils who achieve a high score in all areas at the end of key stage 2”

Lower Ability Students

It appears that there will be no indication in Teacher Assessment of how close students were to meeting the required standard. The scaled score will provide some indication of these.

Children working significantly below average levels (i.e. with specific SEN) will continue to be assessed using P-levels.

Changes to Accountability

From 2016, floor standards will be raised dramatically. In 2014, schools are expected to have 65% of children achieving Level 4 or above. From 2016 this will rise to 85% being required to meet the new higher standard (expected to equate to current Level 4b)

This is a massive leap. However, it is potentially softened by the second standard about progression. Unfortunately, in typical DfE style, the progression measure of “sufficient progress” will be based on the average progression – another case of all schools needing to be better than average? Perhaps. The detail is too vague to be sure at the moment, but we do know that the department will decide what constitutes “sufficient progress” after the KS2 tests have been taken and marked.
7 Questions to ask about any new ‘post-levels’ assessment scheme

Schools up and down the country are faced with the task of finding a replacement assessment tool to monitor progress and attainment as National Curriculum levels become obsolete. Doubtless there will be plenty of private products on the market, and many organisations willing to charge schools for software, booklets, hardware, coloured highlighters… the works! This blog attempts to outline some of the questions leaders should be asking about any scheme they consider adopting before buying in. This is not a case of trying to find a best-fit. If a scheme is going to be worth investing both money and time in, then it needs to meet all of these criteria.

1. Can it be shared with students?
All manner of systems is likely to become available, but I think that the first question any school should ask of any product is whether or not what is recorded in the assessment system can be meaningfully shared with the students. For example, a spreadsheet which simply records a percentage of coverage, or a scaled score will not provide meaningful information that can be used with students to set next-step targets, or to record the detail of progress made so far. We know so much now of the importance of feedback, not least the fact that a simple number or grade won’t cut it. A meaningful assessment system needs to record exactly what students can and can’t do, and then make clear where energies need to be focussed next.

2. Is it manageable and useful for teachers?
One of my greatest concerns about APP is that it created unnecessary work. The detailed processes of highlighting, ticking boxes, working through a flow-chart and then moderating, all to agree that the child I thought was working at Level 4 is indeed working at level 4 was unhelpful. The only useful aspect was being able to see where gaps were that could next be taught or targeted. But the system was over-complicated. For example, within level 4 there were 3 or 4 statements which essentially boiled down to the idea of beginning to use paragraphs. Once a child could have one statement highlighted, it was quite likely that the others followed. Teachers value documentation which supports progression, but they don’t need to highlight every tiny step – they become experts in this because it is what they do day in, day out. Any assessment system needs to build on the benefits of APP – by identifying next steps, and judging progress against key areas – without adding a burden of endless paperwork or electronic clicking.

3. Will it identify where students are falling behind soon enough?
Much of what schools are about now is identifying those students who are struggling to make progress and intervening to ensure that they do. Consequently, an assessment system needs to record meaningful information (note, not data) about how students are progressing through required learning, and be able to highlight those students who are at risk of faltering. The current system fails on this count. NC levels were too broad to be able to identify students who were not making progress, but sub-levels did not link closely enough to the content. Consequently, it was perfectly possible for a Year 6 student to achieve level 4 or even level 5 in mathematics, without knowing his multiplication tables. The weighting of strands was insufficiently detailed to allow meaningful identification of strugglers, or often left it too late.

Any replacement system should have clear flags which highlight where students are struggling to keep up with age-related expectations. Thus, if Y4 is now the stage at which students are expected to know their tables, then any child failing to meet that goal by the summer term of Y4 should be easily identified, and then supported to do so.
4. Will it help shape curriculum and teaching?
Another failing of the levels system was in their breadth. That was originally an advantage, but over time it failed to support teachers in adapting and developing their curriculum to meet the needs of students because it provided inadequate information about what children could and could not do. The new curriculum makes explicit what should be covered – particularly in primary core subjects – and so a good assessment system should build on that to help teachers identify where they need to focus their attention.

5. Will it provide information that can be shared with parents?
Despite what central government has claimed, parents have largely come to understand the broad system of levels, and usually find it easy to understand the measures in reports and parents consultations. However, they have never given anything more than a broad indication of attainment. They don’t provide parents with clear information about relative attainment, nor about what action can be taken by students, schools or parents to move their children on. In many cases teachers have begun to do this, but a good assessment system needs to provide a meaningful measure that can be shared with parents (which could be as simple as a percentage of annual objectives achieved) as well as meaningful information about what needs to happen next. There is much overlap with question 1 here, and a system which provides information well for students will usually be successful in informing parents.

6. Will it help to track progress across the key stage?
Tracking progress is essential in schools now, and so any assessment system must allow schools to identify how its students are progressing towards national expectations for the end of the key stage. Through some collation of recorded information in an assessment scheme, it ought to be possible to create some sort of data-based indication of progress across the cohort, as well as for specific groups.

If a system is built around indicating whether annual objectives have been met (or perhaps even partly met), then it would be possible to draw an overall average either of what percentage of all objectives have been covered, or of students who have, say, met 80% or more of the objectives for the year. Such data could be analysed by groups, gender, etc. as we currently do with sub-levels.

7. Does it avoid making meaningless sub-divisions?
Sub-levels have never meant very much because they were never directly linked to any meaningful information. We need to avoid a repetition of this. Some schemes will suggest 3 sub-grades of achievement (or even 5 or more!) within each strand. But adding an appearance of precision does not necessarily improve accuracy. Increasing sub-divisions leads to increasing subjectivity and decreasing accuracy. If we take a straightforward objective from Year 5 Science as an example:

*Children should be taught to describe the movement of the Moon relative to the Earth*

It strikes me that this should largely be a yes/no decision. Either a child can or cannot describe that movement. You could argue that there are students who are beginning to but perhaps have small gaps in their knowledge – say, knowing that it orbits the Earth, but not knowing the length of the cycle. Accordingly, it might be reasonable to say that a child has either partly-met or fully-met the objective. To attempt to divide it into smaller categories (beginning? mostly?) becomes meaningless and adds nothing to the system but complexity. Any viable system must avoid this temptation.

Other Resources Online

To help schools preparing for the new curriculum, several resources are available on some key websites. The main websites recommended here offer resources which may be helpful. All of these sites are free.

www.primarycurriculum.me.uk
The primary curriculum objectives organised by year group, as well as additional support materials such as: PowerPoints for staff or governors’ meetings, details comparison documents for core subjects, jigsaw long-term planning sheets and more. There are also links to the various subject associations’ pages supporting the new curriculum.

michaelt1979.wordpress.com
Further blogs from this booklet’s author, covering all aspects of primary education, teaching and assessment.

curriculum2014.wordpress.com
Comparison analysis for the foundation subjects, comparing the new curriculum content to the 2000 National Curriculum.

www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/41211
Excellent resources from the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics that provides exemplification, sample activities, assessment ideas and supporting videos linked to each of the objectives and strands in the new primary mathematics curriculum.

www.computingatschool.org.uk
The excellent resources from this group support teachers in implementing the new curriculum. Of particular use is the guide for primary teachers available from this page:

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