

4.2 Curriculum and organisation of learning

You will need to describe your proposed curriculum in detail, explaining what will be taught, when, for how long and to whom.

In your application you will need to:

- Describe your curriculum in detail, including the range of qualifications which might be offered;
- Set out a curriculum model that shows what proportion of learning is given over to each subject or area of learning for each year group;
- Outline how long your days, terms and years will be and why; and
- Outline your approach to Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Implications of the curriculum

Your curriculum is central to what happens in the school. You should consider its impact on every **other part of your plan**, and especially:

- Your vision;
- Behaviour and attendance;
- Class size;
- Staffing;
- Premises; and
- Budget.

Curriculum and qualifications

In this section you should provide information on what will be taught, and what qualifications your pupils will work towards.

You will need to provide a “broad and balanced” curriculum plan which focuses “appropriately” on the core areas of learning. For **primary**, this includes the core subjects of **English, mathematics** and **science** and will need to support pupil progression to secondary education. For **secondary** this includes, but is not limited to, the core subjects of **English, mathematics** and **science**.

Note: free standing 16-19 schools do not have to provide a broad and balanced curriculum

You will be expected to support the attainment of **recognised qualifications** at the end of Key Stage 4 for secondary (normally for age 16), including having a regard for supporting young people to achieve the English Baccalaureate. In primary, you will be expected to support the Key Stage 2 national tests (normally for age 11).

Beyond this, Free Schools have the freedom to develop and structure their curriculum in response to local circumstances and the individual needs of their pupils and the wider community. You are not required to follow the National Curriculum, but can do if you wish. This approach allows a stronger vocational focus in some cases, or more time to address basic literacy and numeracy needs in others. It permits a rich mix of subjects or areas of learning.

If you want to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that does not follow the National Curriculum you may be interested in reading the Ofsted publication “**Completing the record of inspection evidence and judgements**” (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse->

[all-by/Other/General/Completing-the-record-of-inspection-evidence-and-judgements-independent-schools](#)). This describes areas of learning that need not be delivered through separately timetabled subjects but can be woven together to create a school curriculum.

You may also want to consider the criteria used by Ofsted to judge the quality of curriculum provision. Your school will be inspected by Ofsted before opening, and again within the first two years after opening. The current **Inspection Framework** can be downloaded from the internet (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Framework-for-the-inspection-of-maintained-schools-in-England-from-September-2009>).

However, you should be aware that a new Ofsted school inspection framework is currently under consultation and will commence from January 2012.

Some questions to consider:

- Will there be anything distinctive about your curriculum and the qualifications you offer?
Example: one secondary school awards its own diploma to pupils who demonstrate academic excellence, show outstanding leadership and entrepreneurial skills and contribute to society.
- Will you use any other providers to enhance your curriculum?
Example: One Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) paid an external provider to build and then race go-karts with the pupils. This provision was monitored as part of the school's self-evaluation system.

Your curriculum will also need to cater for the needs and interests of the full range of pupils in your school such as:

- The gifted and talented;
- Pupils with SEN and disabilities;
- Pupils from a deprived background – many of whom are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM);
- Those who are learning English as an additional language;
- Children who are in care; and
- Learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Catering for these groups does not mean you need a separate curriculum for each but you will need to build in plans for how you will adapt the main curriculum so that it meets all pupils' needs inclusively.


Curriculum model

You will also need to provide your **curriculum model** in this section. This will include describing the cycle of lessons and the period over which this cycle will last.

You will need to consider how you will use the greater flexibility you have to meet individual pupils' needs and strengths, whilst retaining the broad and balanced curriculum which is an entitlement for all, and in a way that will be both affordable and manageable.

Year 7 example:

As many subjects as you need



Total No. hours per cycle
28

	Subject A	Subject B	Subject C	Subject D	Subject E	Subject F	Subject G	Etc →
Class 1	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	
Class 2	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	
Class 3	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	
Etc.								

As many classes as you need

Number of hours allocated per cycle for each 'subject'

This information would then be provided for each cohort / year group as appropriate.

Length of school day, term, and year

Guidelines for maintained schools

You **do not need to follow** the DfE guidelines for maintained schools, but they may be a good reference point:

'pupils are required to attend school for **at least 190 days a year** (38 weeks), with provision for **at least 380 sessions**, a session being regarded as at least a two-hour period morning or afternoon. If a school meets for fewer than 380 sessions a year, the education may still be full time because the smaller number of sessions may be compensated for by sessions of greater length.'

The guidance also recommends **minimum amounts of taught time per week** for different key stages, from 21 hours for Key Stage 1 to 24 hours for Key Stage 4.

Some questions to consider:

- How will the amount of teaching time be matched to the needs of your pupils?
Example: In some schools, different groups of pupils receive different amounts of taught time, depending on their needs. The rest of the time is devoted to self-supported study and other enrichment activities.
- How many terms will you divide the school year into and why?
Example: Some schools have divided their year into five terms, separated by holidays of equal length. This means there is less risk of the momentum of learning being lost through the long summer break.
- Will every day be the same length?
Example: Some schools end early on one day a week to provide time for staff training.
- What will be the optimum length of lessons to maximise progress for your pupils? Will all lessons be the same length for different subjects and for different groups of pupils?
Example: You might want to have longer lessons for some practical subjects and shorter ones for subjects such as modern foreign languages

Case studies

Case Study 1: Tailored pathways in a secondary school

Nine different tailored curriculum pathways are offered at Key Stage 4 at a maintained school in the south of England.

Brief description of the project

Each pathway is tailored to suit certain abilities and interests. In addition to the core curriculum, the pathways all offer a different selection of extra GCSE subjects for pupils to choose from, or a particular focus – such as a BTEC in Sports Sciences or Performing Arts – or a more vocational slant such as a college-linked course in engineering.

Even within the core areas there are differences that take account of the interests of the pupils (some study English Language and Literature while others take Media Studies; some pathways do Modular Science while the high achieving pathway does the three Individual Sciences.)

“If you’ve got children who are motivated and who are studying subjects of their own choice, then they’re more inspired, there are fewer behaviour problems and they’re set up to succeed in life rather than being faced with failing from the age of 16,” says the Deputy Head.

Outcomes of the project

Behaviour and discipline in the school is evidence of the success of this project. There was only a single exclusion last year, in a school of 1,400 pupils within the city centre area. The success of the scheme is also reflected in the school’s results. The pathways were first introduced five years ago, and over the last four years the number of pupils achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE has risen from 47% to 64%.

The value of letting children choose to study subjects in which they are interested is even more apparent when core curriculum results are removed from the equation. 89 per cent of pupils taking GCSE Leisure and Tourism get a Grade A* to C, compared to a national average of 29, for example. In Applied Business the figure is 82% against a national average of 58%.

Case Study 2: Areas of focus in a group of primary schools

What did the group want to achieve?

A group of 18 primary schools was formed in 2006 in the west of England, with the aim of harnessing the local city's energy and diversity to provide an engaging, challenging curriculum fit for the 21st century. With support and challenge from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), the schools embarked on a journey to develop their curriculum in an innovative, disciplined way.

Three common themes soon emerged and became the main focus for the group's work:

- Use of time – ensuring that learning directs the timetable rather than the other way round;
- Bristol as a resource – making the most of opportunities on offer in the community; and
- Pupil voice – getting children more involved in deciding and planning what and how they learn.

How was learning organised?

Each school identified an 'area of focus' for their curriculum development work, such as increasing children's independence, developing their ability to work in teams or improving literacy or numeracy skills. Focusing on the three fundamental questions that underlie the work of all Curriculum Network schools – What are we trying to achieve? How will we organise learning to achieve these aims? How will we know whether we have been successful? – was central to success.

What was the impact?

The improvement in National Curriculum test scores was greater than across the local authority as a whole. Many schools also highlighted that as a result of curriculum change teachers were enjoying their jobs more, there was a new relish for learning and, perhaps as a result of their children's increased enthusiasm for school, parents were becoming much more involved in the curriculum. Eight schools in the Bristol Futures Group were inspected by Ofsted during the second year of the project and, of these, six were judged 'outstanding' in terms of curriculum. As the national average for 'outstanding' is just 18%, achieving a rate of 75% is a considerable achievement.

<http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/525.aspx>

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special Educational Needs (SEN) refers to the additional requirements of children with learning difficulties, physical and, sensory disabilities. Some pupils with SEN or other additional educational needs may benefit from temporary or extended support. The school also has obligations to improve access for disabled pupils and prevent discrimination.

Principles

The duties of schools under Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) are:

- Not to treat disabled pupils 'less favourably';
- To make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage compared to their peers;
- To draw up plans to show how, over time, they will increase access to education for disabled pupils; and
- To comply with the Disability Equality Duty (DED).

The DDA definition of disability is broad and includes a wide range of impairments including learning disabilities, dyslexia, diabetes, HIV and epilepsy, where the effect of the impairment on the pupil's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activity is adverse, substantial and long-term.

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) places a **general duty** on schools to have regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA 1995 (as amended);
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability;
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life; and
- Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

Additionally, schools have a **specific duty** to develop, implement and publish, in consultation with disabled pupils, staff and parents/carers, a **disability equality scheme**. Schemes should be published in a school's prospectus or on its website and hard copies should be freely available in reception areas. Schemes should be reviewed annually and replaced every three years.

Minimum requirements

Fair admissions

Free Schools must participate in local Fair Access Protocol arrangements that ensure that hard-to-place pupils, including those with SEN but without a Statement, are admitted equitably to local

schools – even where schools are already full. You can obtain a copy of your local Fair Access Protocol from your LA or Council. There may be slight regional variations in procedure, but generally a panel will make decisions about the appropriate school for hard-to-place pupils. The school, which may be a Free School, will be expected to enrol the pupil.

The Fair Access Protocol does not apply to children with a SEN statement. However, parents of a child with a SEN statement have the right to express a preference for the school at which they wish their child to be educated, and the LA has a duty to name the parents' preferred school in a Statement. Free Schools must consent to being named in a Statement in almost all circumstances, "unless the school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs, or the placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom the child would be educated, or with the efficient use of resources." (Education Act 1996, Schedule 27)

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

This is a requirement for all schools. The SENCO (also called an Inclusion Co-ordinator or a Learning Support Co-ordinator) must have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). They are responsible for the following tasks:

- Managing school-based provision;
- Providing professional guidance to school staff on matters relating to SEN;
- Advising the school leadership on SEN strategy; and
- Liaising with parents, carers, external agencies, professionals and the LA.

Statements

Schools have a responsibility to prepare and manage statutory assessment paperwork for current pupils. Statutory assessment may lead to a Statement of Special Educational Needs. A Statement is normally made when the needs of a pupil cannot reasonably be provided within the resources available to the school. Assessments are carried out by the LA and can be requested by either the school or the parent. If the LA decides to carry out an assessment the school will need to provide information about the pupil. The school will also need to compile paperwork (including the view of parents or carers) for the Annual Review of a pupil's Statement and prepare an Annual Review report.

Areas to Consider in Your Application

- How the curriculum will be accessible to pupils with special educational needs;
- Whether ICT could increase access and support pupils with additional and special educational needs;
- To what extent pupils' needs will be met in the classroom and when it might be appropriate to provide other support, resources and spaces;
- The role of the SENCO, class teachers and teaching assistants and how they will work together to meet identified additional or special educational needs; and
- Links with external services and agencies such as health and social care and with the LA where pupils with SEN require additional help.

Creating your SEN plan

It is up schools to decide how to meet their legal duties to support each pupil with SEN following consideration of the individual child's needs. In doing this, the school must 'have regard' to the guidance in the SEN Code of Practice

(<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/sen/sen/guidance/a0013160/the-sen-code-of-practice>).

The SEN Code of Practice sets out guidance on policies and procedures aimed at enabling pupils with SEN to reach their full potential, to be included fully in their school communities, and make a successful transition to adulthood. You must read the SEN Code of Practice before devising the SEN plan for your school.

Different Levels of Need and Support – A Graduated Approach

Some pupils with SEN or other additional educational needs (AEN) may need temporary or extended support. The diagram below sets out the continuum of support that you may want to consider when developing a strategy for supporting pupils with SEN or AEN.

The Class Teacher

- A range of strategies and interventions can be used in the classroom when a pupil is having a temporary difficulty.
- This approach is likely to meet the needs of the majority of pupils.

School Action

- For pupils who still make insufficient progress.
- Identified in discussion with the SENCO.
- May result in the development of an 'Individual Education Plan' (IEP), providing additional support for a limited period.

School Action Plus

- Where difficulties continue despite School Action.
- Combination of additional help and more input from external professionals is considered
- Requires the parents'/ guardian's consent.

Referral & Statutory Assessment

- Applies to a very small number of pupils.
- May result in a statement of SEN which specifies the long-term support required.
- The school, in consultation with the parents and external agencies can make a formal referral, asking the Local Authority (LA) to initiate a statutory assessment.
- Parents or guardians can also make a formal referral.
- The LA will need information and evidence about the pupil's progress and support to date.

Funding for SEN

- **School Action and School Action Plus** will be funded from the school's budget. The Governing Body will need to decide how to spend the school's available resources to meet the needs of any pupils with SEN and to do this in a way that is in line with the guidance and any statutory aspects of the SEN Code of Practice.
- **Any additional support that is identified in a Statement is funded by the LA.** It is the LA that assesses if the individual pupil's needs should be supported with additional resources. Some LAs delegate the funding for this resource directly to schools, so this should be clarified.
- **Where a school does not meet its SEN funding agreement obligations,** the Secretary of State has the role of ensuring that those obligations are met.

Potential changes to SEN legislation

The Coalition Government has recently published a Green Paper titled *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*. The consultation will run until 30 June 2011 and may lead to changes in SEN legislation.

The paper makes wide-ranging proposals including:

- A new approach to identifying SEN through a single Early Years setting-based category and school-based category of SEN;
- A new single assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plan by 2014;
- The option of a personal budget for all families with children with a statement of SEN or a new Education, Health and Care Plan;
- Giving parents a real choice of school, either a mainstream or special school; and
- Introducing greater independence to the assessment of children's needs

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/sen/a0075339/sengreenpaper><http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/sen/a0075339/sengreenpaper>

Further information

Contact NSN for tailored specialist advice: info@newschoolsnetwork.org

The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) at qcda.gov.uk with specific case studies at <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/search-results.aspx?keys=&page=0&phase=&topic=20&format=&for=&sortby=2&sortdir=0>

The International Primary Curriculum at www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com

The international Baccalaureate website at: <http://www.ibo.org/>

Completing the record of inspection evidence and judgements. Section 162A independent school Inspection guidance (Ofsted, Reference no: 090051) provides guidance for inspecting the curriculum of Independent schools which may be helpful.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/.../Completing%20the%20ROIEJ%20Jan%2011.doc

The Framework for School Inspection (Ofsted, Reference no: 090019) provides the criteria and descriptors set out in the inspection framework and guidance illustrate the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of schools. It is therefore a valuable source document for schools seeking to implement a robust, nationally referenced, self evaluation system.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Framework-for-the-inspection-of-maintained-schools-in-England-from-September-2009>

Proposals for inspection arrangements for maintained schools and academies from January 2012

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Consultations/Inspection-2012-proposals-for-inspection-arrangements-for-maintained-schools-and-academies-from-January-2012>

Guidance on the organisation of learning from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT)

http://curriculumdesign.ssatrust.org.uk/Resources/index.php/How_do_we_organise_learning%3F

Specific to SEN:

- **DfE's official page:** <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/sen/sen>
- **Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in schools and Early Years settings** is an essential guide to the duties set out in the DDA in the CD-ROM publication. It is designed to help schools and LAs to fulfil their obligations to improve access and prevent discrimination: <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DfES%200160%202006>.
- **Disability Equality Schemes (DES) and schools: A duty under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)** was produced by the DfE (then DCSF) and National Strategies produced in 2005. It is a step-by-step guide for schools, outlining the actions they need to take to comply with the DDA. The National Strategies also produced a self-evaluation resource to help schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their disability equality schemes: <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/245305>.
- **SEN National Guidance and FAQ:** www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/SEN

- **Information on meeting pupils' needs, SEN resources, training and Information Sheets, e.g. 'The Effective Role of the SENCO':** www.nasen.org.uk
- **Developing Inclusion in your school:** a range of supportive resources and information <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/inclusion>
- **SEN & ICT weblink:** <http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/>