

Subject:

Circular Number:

2003/09

**THE NORTHERN IRELAND CURRICULUM:
CURRENT STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

Date of Issue:

4 June 2003

Target Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; and
- Teachers' Unions.

Summary of Contents:

The purpose of this circular is to clarify the current position on the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and provide information on potential changes resulting from the Curriculum Review.

Enquiries:

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Governor Awareness:

Essential

Status of Contents:

Advice
Information for schools

Related Documents:

Superseded Documents:

Expiry Date:

Not applicable

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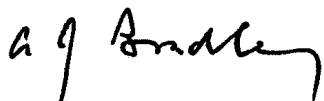
Introduction

1. The purpose of this Circular is to clarify for schools the position on the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Schools should be aware that the current legislative requirements will remain in place throughout the 2003/04 and the 2004/05 school years at least. No changes will be made to the current statutory position until September 2005 at the earliest¹. Any change to the curricular requirements thereafter will be carefully planned to be consistent with the stage of piloting and preparation reached in schools, so that change can take place in a planned and developmental way.
2. The Department is currently considering the advice received from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) on revisions to the curriculum at both primary and post-primary levels. The Council proposes to consult widely again on further proposals for Key Stage 3 during the current calendar year. The Minister's decisions on the curriculum proposals for the other Key Stages will be circulated to schools by the beginning of the new school year.
3. The 2003/04 and 2004/05 school years will therefore be used for planning, piloting and training, and further details will be issued to schools in due course. Any piloting or development work which may need a change to current requirements will be considered on a case by case basis by the Department under existing legislation which provides for curriculum development work and experiments. The opportunity will also be taken to evaluate further the work emerging from the various pilot schemes currently in operation. Where appropriate, and as resources permit, the pilot schemes will be expanded, for example the Citizenship Project in post-primary schools.
4. An exception to the expansion of piloting will be the Early Years Enriched Curriculum pilot project, where one of the key factors to emerge has been evidence highlighting the need for classroom

¹ This will apply also to the RE Curriculum, for which revised proposals will be the subject of separate consultation this year.

assistance in Year 2 in addition to Year 1 if primary schools are to implement the Enriched Curriculum successfully. As this requires significant additional resources that were not envisaged at the time bids were submitted for the original pilot, it has been agreed with CCEA that, unless the financial situation should change due to circumstances which are not foreseen at this point, the pilot will continue in the existing schools, but will not be extended to other schools next year.

5. In the case of Key Stage 4, the CCEA review, and indeed schools themselves, identified work-related learning as an important issue to be addressed in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. In response the Department introduced the Key Stage 4 Flexibility pilot scheme in April 2000. This initiative has been successful in increasing attendance and pupil motivation and offers innovative work-related learning programmes that help to inform career choices.² While the Key Stage 4 Flexibility Initiative will continue until the outcomes of the Curriculum Review for Key Stage 4 have been agreed and put in place, in the interim the Department's written approval will continue to be required before a school may participate in the initiative: details can be found in Circular 2003/4, available on the Department's website, www.deni.gov.uk.



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² The Education and Training Inspectorate's Report on the Key Stage 4 Flexibility Initiative on Vocational and Work-Related Learning 2000-2002 is available on the Department's website, www.deni.gov.uk/inspection_services

