

Subject:

**CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND
REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS 2008/09**

Circular Number:

2008/22

Date of Issue:

30 September 2008

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;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- NICIE; and
- Teachers' Unions

Summary of Contents:

The purpose of this circular is to set out the arrangements for managing 2008/09, the second of the three year programme of implementing the revised curriculum and associated assessment and reporting arrangements.

Enquiries:

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Governor Awareness:

Essential

Status of Contents:

Advice / Information
for schools

Related Documents:

DE Circulars 2007/10 and
2006/26

Superseded Documents:

Not applicable

Expiry Date:

Not applicable

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1. This circular sets out the arrangements for managing 2008/09, the second of the three year programme of implementing the revised curriculum and associated assessment and reporting arrangements. It should be read in conjunction with the letter of 30 September 2008 from Robson Davison and Stanley Goudie.

Update from 2007/08

2. As you know, we were successful in bidding for additional funding to support the Foundation Stage of the revised curriculum and secured £32 million over three years for that purpose. This means that, for the first time, all pupils in Years 1 and 2 have access to classroom assistance. A further additional £12 million over three years is being provided to increase support to teaching principals. Schools have also received replacement computers and additional laptops as part of the Lot 6 roll-out and to support teaching, learning and assessment in the classroom.

Arrangements for 2008/09

Curriculum

3. The Minister of Education, Caitríona Ruane, has made clear that, in the interests of all our young people, we must keep the momentum of curriculum implementation going. The timetable therefore remains as previously communicated – from this term the statutory implementation of the revised curriculum will apply for Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 in primary and for Years 8, 9, 11 and 12 in post-primary schools.
4. Training and support will continue to be provided to schools as part of the targeted programme of revised curriculum training, sequenced in line with the statutory implementation timescales for principals and teachers, and building on feedback provided. Support will also be available from ELB Curriculum Advisory and Support Officers in the course of their normal responsibilities. The provision of the 5 + 5 professional development days will continue in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 years to support principals in leading the implementation within their school.

5. It is our expectation that, in introducing the revised curriculum and making use of the additional flexibility it offers for teachers to tailor their teaching to meet the needs and interests of their pupils, there will continue to be a very clear focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy within the training provided and within classroom practice.
6. While implementation continues and the Department expects to see ongoing progress in terms of planning and adapting practice as necessary, teachers and principals should be assured that there will be consistency in support. This support will be reflected in the inspection approach taken by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).
7. As set out in the letter of 30 September 2008 from Robson Davison and Stanley Goudie, over the implementation period, and consistent with the maintenance of high standards in learning and teaching, the approach of ETI will focus on the identification of best practice in schools. Inspectors will encourage teachers and report good or excellent practice in relation to the implementation of the revised curriculum. This does not mean that schools can take little or no action. The Department and ETI recognise that teachers will need time to plan and amend their classroom practice as necessary to deliver the revised curriculum. The joint focus of the Department and ETI during this time is on supporting principals/ teachers, and on ensuring that every child receives the best education, and achieves standards in line with their potential.
8. The revised curriculum already has, at its core, a strong focus on the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy. It offers teachers more flexibility to use their professional judgement to plan, deliver and evaluate learning in ways that meet the needs of the children and young people in their classrooms. Literacy and numeracy are, however, too fundamental for progress not to be led by a specific strategy and a focused, strategic approach is therefore needed. Therefore the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, being consulted on until 30 November 2008, sets out a strategic approach supporting the delivery of literacy and numeracy in the classroom, in the context of the revised curriculum.

Assessment

InCAS

9. InCAS assessments, which were introduced in primary schools last year for Year 5 pupils, will apply to pupils in Years 5 and 6 in 2008/09. As before, these need to be conducted in the autumn term as the purpose is to support diagnostic assessment. The InCAS assessments are not for any purpose related to the transfer of pupils from primary to post-primary school. They are designed as diagnostic assessments to help teachers plan their teaching to meet the identified needs of the pupils in their classrooms. Improvements have been made to the InCAS software, taking account of feedback from schools last year, and the position will continue to be reviewed as InCAS rolls out.

10. Taking account of the feedback from schools, the Department is also providing computer mouse devices for all laptops in primary schools in September 2008 through C2k. In addition, further headphones will be provided at the same time with more being provided later in the 2008/09 school year. This means that in autumn 2009, when InCAS will roll out to pupils in Years 4-7, there will be headphones for all managed service computers and laptops in primary schools, and computer mouse devices for all managed service laptops in primary schools.

11. In June 2007 schools were advised that, from autumn 2008, they would report the InCAS assessments formally to parents and that those reports would be centrally collated. Having taken account of the evaluation information from autumn 2007, including the positive response to training and support provided and the feedback provided from schools and from individual teachers and their representatives, the Department has decided that the following procedures should apply for the autumn 2008 InCAS assessments:
 - **InCAS assessments will continue to be conducted in the autumn term in all Year 5 and Year 6 classes;**

- **Schools must offer a meeting with parents in the autumn term;**
- **Schools must report the assessment outcomes to parents in the autumn term.** As you know, the original intention was that those outcomes would, from this year, be reported in writing to parents. In response to feedback, we have for this year introduced some additional flexibility and, in the 2008/09 school year, it will be for schools to decide whether they should report orally or in writing and the format of any such reports. Equally, schools can decide whether they provide the outcomes for autumn 2008 only, or if they also provide outcomes from autumn 2007. This will allow a further year of familiarisation with the process of reporting InCAS outcomes to parents before the requirement to report in writing is introduced in 2009/10;
- **Where a parent asks for certain information to be made available in writing or orally, this should be provided;**
- **The Department/CCEA will not collect the InCAS information centrally,** recognising its diagnostic purpose within a class and school. Principals should make good use of the range of assessment information within their school, including InCAS outcomes, to ensure that standards are raised and that every child can achieve his or her full potential.

Levels of Progression

12. Currently the Levels of Progression are in draft format and the Department will analyse advice, expected from CCEA later in the autumn term, about how they relate to existing levels. Clearly principals and teachers need time to familiarise themselves with the Levels of Progression once they are finalised. Part of the advice expected from CCEA therefore is whether the intended timescale to introduce the Levels of Progression from the 2009/10 school year is realistic and achievable in that context.

13. Recognising that the shift in assessment to align with the revised curriculum is another step in terms of full implementation, the Department

has decided that the requirement to assess the cross-curricular skill of Using ICT, which will be statutory across all Key Stages for the first time, will be introduced in the school year following Communication and Using Mathematics. Therefore, if the Levels of Progression for Communication and Using Mathematics are introduced in 2009/10, then Using ICT will follow in 2010/11 and so on.

14. Principals and teachers will be kept fully informed of any changes to the intended timescale and should be reassured that we appreciate the importance of manageability and time to familiarise staff with the Levels of Progression as key determining factors in this decision.

Reporting To Parents

15. As you know, we are introducing a more standard format for the annual report to parents. The Department will be drafting legislation to make these reporting arrangements statutory, and will be consulting during the autumn on this. In the meantime schools are still required to provide meaningful information to parents across the curriculum, especially relating to assessment outcomes in Language & Literacy and Mathematics & Numeracy.
16. There are some points coming out of the CCEA evaluation of the 2007/08 reporting cycle which it may be helpful to clarify:
 - When completing the annual report it is a matter of individual choice if schools/ teachers want to use the electronic report writing tool (Profiles 7) or not. Word versions are available or the reports can be handwritten;
 - It is also a matter of school/ teacher choice whether to use the comment banks, which are optional;
 - Where a school would previously have provided additional information such as class test results, they will have the flexibility to continue to provide such information to parents;
 - There are issues around data security in terms of full home access to pupil data in the context of completing reports at

home, which some teachers indicated they would like to do. However, this would be the case no matter what the reporting requirements;

- CCEA and C2k will continue to provide helpdesk support and training, including online support materials.

Reporting To Government

17. As we need to be able to account to the Assembly and to the public about standards in our schools, there continues to be a need for schools to report end of Key Stage outcomes via CCEA in line with Circular 2006/26:

- Schools will continue to provide assessment outcomes via CCEA relating to Language & Literacy and Mathematics & Numeracy for Years 4, 7 and 10;
- Schools will provide information in terms of levels, using the existing end of Key Stage level descriptions, based either on teacher assessment supported by CCEA assessment units and moderation/ tests, or purely on teacher assessment;
- Schools should continue to set targets for improvement based on data provided by the Department.

18. Further information about curriculum, assessment and reporting continues to be made available through the Department's website at:

www.deni.gov.uk and through the revised curriculum website at:
www.nicurriculum.org.uk.



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