

The new secondary curriculum: a guide for parents

What has changed?

From September 2008, a new national curriculum is being introduced across England that has been designed to raise standards and help all their learners meet the challenges of life in the 21st century. The national curriculum applies to pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools (including community special schools, foundation special schools and voluntary controlled schools). The changes will apply to the Year 7 intake for 2008 and will follow these pupils as they progress through their secondary school career.

A new set of aims, which incorporates the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*, has been the starting point for all the changes to the secondary curriculum, which should enable all young people to become:

- **successful learners** who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- **confident individuals** who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- **responsible citizens** who make a positive contribution to society.

The new curriculum has been designed to motivate and engage learners and help them to succeed. There is also a clear focus on the core knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and ICT which young people need for education, employment and life. The new programmes of study will ensure that assessment supports teaching and learning, providing more opportunities for focused support and extra challenge where needed. A real benefit of the new curriculum is that it gives schools the flexibility to personalise learning and design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners. In the design of the new curriculum, much attention has also been paid to enabling a smooth progression from primary, through secondary and beyond into further and higher education.

Has the list of subjects changed?

The statutory subjects that all pupils must study are art and design, citizenship, design and technology, English, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and science. The teaching of careers education, sex education and religious education is also statutory.

The curriculum also includes non-statutory programmes of study for religious education, personal wellbeing (which includes the requirements for sex and relationship and drugs education) and economic wellbeing and financial capability (which includes the requirements for careers education).

So what's different about the new curriculum?

To give schools greater flexibility, there is less prescribed subject content in the new programmes of study. Instead, the curriculum focuses on the key concepts and processes that underlie each subject. The new programmes of study are laid out in a

common format and this makes it easier to see links between subjects, so that several subjects can share **key concepts** and develop opportunities for the following cross-curricular dimensions:

- healthy lifestyles
- enterprise
- global dimension
- sustainable development
- identity and cultural diversity
- community participation
- technology and the media
- creativity and critical thinking

The Diplomas: new lines of learning

To enable all learners to demonstrate their achievements, schools will be able to offer a range of new and modernised qualifications, which pupils will be able to follow from age 14: diploma qualifications in 17 lines of learning at levels 1, 2 and 3. The first five lines will be piloted nationally from September 2008, delivered through 14 – 19 Partnerships and include: engineering; society, health and development; construction and the built environment; IT; creative and media.

Two diploma lines, IT and Creative and media, will be delivered in Wokingham secondary schools in **September 2009**. Other lines will be accessible through shared arrangements with local colleges.. The diplomas combine practical skill development with theoretical understanding, covering sector and general learning in applied contexts. New qualifications in functional English, mathematics and ICT are also being developed. As well as being qualifications in their own right, these will be incorporated into diplomas and GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT. At the same time, GCSE and A level qualifications are being improved and updated. At key stage 4, the new diplomas will give teachers the chance to work with other schools, colleges and employers to provide relevant and exciting learning experiences.

How will this help my son or daughter to progress towards their chosen career?

With more ways to demonstrate progress and more pathways to choose from at key stage 4, learners are likely to find something that motivates them, continue learning for longer, and gain the qualifications they need to progress into further and higher education. Working towards diplomas will give them relevant experience that will equip them for further learning, life and work.

What is happening in Wokingham schools?

Wokingham secondary schools are currently considering the re-design of their curricular structures in order to reflect the changes and take advantage of the increased flexibility. The changes are viewed as a valuable opportunity for schools to consider their vision for

their learners and how they will tailor their curriculum to the learning and development needs of their specific learning communities. For information on the future plans of individual schools, you will need to contact them directly, but it is worth noting that the changes will happen in a 'rolling programme' for the new Year 7 intake in September 2008, and the above diplomas will not begin until September 2009, so imminent and radical change in any Wokingham school is unlikely.

Useful links:

http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/developing-your-curriculum/what_has_changed_and_why/index.aspx

http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/uploads/A_big_picture_of_the_curriculum_tcm6-1822.pdf?return=http%3A//curriculum.qca.org.uk/organising-your-curriculum/principles_of_curriculum_design/index.aspx

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