



Chartered Institute of
Library and Information
Professionals

National Curriculum Review – Call for Evidence Consultation

This response was completed online. CILIP responded to the following sections:

Section C: General Views on the National Curriculum (Q6b, Q8)

Section H (A29) How Children Learn

Section I (Q33) Transition

Section J Implementation (Q34 & 35)

Section K Other issues (Q36)

Section C

6b. What do you think are the key things that should be done to improve the current National Curriculum?

A major benefit of having a National Curriculum is that it provides school librarians an agreed focus on what is being taught and what resources they need to provide in order to support and extend learning, as well as teaching the information literacy skills required to underpin that learning. In this respect the National Curriculum is a useful forward planning tool.

The current National Curriculum would be improved if it explicitly enabled and required key (learning) professionals such as school librarians to participate in the delivery of the curriculum's content and skills. One key area that needs to be included is information literacy. We define this: *Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.*

The teaching of Information Literacy skills

Information literacy needs to be embedded in each subject taught as an integral part of learning skills. The teaching of information literacy has only ever been advisory and therefore simply hasn't happened. We would argue that Information literacy skills should become a compulsory element to a child's learning and not an advisory "add on".

A greater focus is needed on learning skills across the curriculum. If we wish to have engaged citizens able to contribute fully to the “Big Society” we should be equipping young people with the key skills they will need.

With the current government’s continued commitment to the e-delivery of information, it is essential that young people can not only search the Internet, but can easily and quickly tell what is good quality information that is relevant to them. They also need to learn the skills that will enable them to communicate safely online.

The Digital Citizenship website notes that while schools have made great progress in the area of technology infusion, much remains to be done. A renewed focus must be made on what technologies must be taught as well as how it should be used. Learners must be taught how to learn in a digital society. In other words, learners must be taught to learn anything, anytime, anywhere.

As new technologies emerge, learners need to learn how to use that technology quickly and appropriately. Digital Citizenship involves educating people in a new way - these individuals need a high degree of information literacy skills.

Information Literacy adds an essential dimension of evaluating information and helping people understand their ethical responsibility in how they use information. It is an essential part of lifelong learning and digital citizenship. Without such skills, citizens run the risk of being excluded and disenfranchised from day to day life.

Being able to gain access to digital material is only the beginning and a combination of all the literacies is required. School libraries are an ideal place to support young people and help them develop these skills.

A recent UK national survey¹ found that 87% of qualified librarians are contributing to information literacy work in their school such as planning and conducting lessons in the library or classroom, often jointly with teachers. 59% are contributing actively to the school VLE, learning platform or website.

CILIP would advocate that:

- the development of information literacy competencies be more explicit throughout the curriculum
- teachers are actively encouraged to work closely with school librarians to embed information literacy into the classroom at all key stages

The ‘Digital Britain’ initiative² highlighted the need for Britain to develop both the technological and skills infrastructure to succeed in the digital economy. The report

¹ *School libraries in the UK: a worthwhile past, a difficult present – and a transformed future?* (2010) David Streatfield, Sue Shaper and Simon Rae-Scott

² Department for Culture, Media & Sport and Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform. (2009) *Digital Britain: the interim report*. Cm 7548. London: HMSO. Accessed 24th October 2010

argued that for the UK to “maximise the digital opportunity we will need to ensure a population that is confident and empowered to access, use and create digital media”.

Delivering success in the National Curriculum

A recent Ofsted report³ noted that the primary and secondary schools visited emphasised the school library as contributing markedly to improving literacy skills. We should build on this success.

Empirical studies from the US⁴ over nearly two decades, show the measurable impact school libraries and librarians have on student achievement.

Reading for pleasure has been shown to be an indicator of increased academic achievement. Reading for pleasure is not something which should be seen as being confined to the study of English. Reading for pleasure has a much broader application across the National Curriculum.

Figures in a recent OECD study⁵ suggest that we could close 90% of the achievement gap between boys and girls if we could persuade boys to read for pleasure.

These are both areas in which key professionals such as school librarians are expert in and are able to think, act and deliver learning across the curriculum.

8. Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make about the issues covered in this section

There needs to be the opportunity to have a much more personalised approach to learning and room for creativity. *School libraries: A plan for improvement*⁶ published last year provides the nearest thing we have to a national vision of good school library provision fit for purpose.

One of four strands that run through this key report is personalisation. The National Curriculum could be improved by allowing a greater opportunity for more personalised learning.

For this to happen there has to be a new found confidence in teachers and other key professionals, including school librarians, to allow for creativity, spontaneity and collaboration.

One of the stated aims of the proposed changes to the National Curriculum is to provide children with a rich menu of cultural experience. Professionally staffed

³ Ofsted, 2011, *Removing the barriers to literacy*

⁴ *School libraries work!* Research Foundation Paper. 3rd edition. Scholastic Library Publishing, 2008.

⁵ Bradshaw, J., Ager, R., Burge, B. and Wheeler, R. (2010). PISA 2009: Achievement of 15-year-olds in England. Slough: NFER.

⁶ *School libraries: a plan for improvement* (2010) MLA and the National Literacy Trust

school libraries offer the physical space and professional expertise to run various cultural activities such as author visits, reading clubs, exhibitions and displays. Getting involved in local and regional book awards and Carnegie and Greenaway Award shadowing also forms a part of this type of activity centred around the school library. In 2011, 90,000 children in 3,800 library and school based groups will read, debate and engage with the shortlisted books through the *Shadowing Scheme*.

Section H

29. What research evidence on how children learn provides the most useful insights into how particular knowledge should best be sequenced within the National Curriculum Programmes of study

The National Curriculum currently encourages the development of pupils problem solving and research skills, including the ability to find and re-use information. This is particularly highlighted in the PLTS (Personal Learning and Thinking Skills). However, PLTS have only ever been advisory and therefore uptake has been patchy.

Children learn better when they are confident, independent and engaged. School libraries play an important part in children's learning and the best school librarians will have the expertise to encourage and develop independent learners.⁷

New technologies mean a new learning environment. Web 2.0 and the VLE provide opportunities for different ways of learning and many school librarians have taken the lead in developing a school's VLE.

In a recent seminar,⁸ Sharon Markless spoke of learning as a navigation through multiple forms of participation in order to learn. The learning process becomes one where there are fewer vertical transactions of producers to recipients. The boundaries between teacher and learner become blurred. This new style of learning needs to be taken into account in any new developments of the National Curriculum.

In the previously mentioned report⁹, Ofsted commented on the direct impact a well-resourced library and an enthusiastic and responsive librarian had upon the attitudes of the students towards reading. This was the same conclusion reached by Ofsted in an earlier report¹⁰ which emphasised the importance of the appointment of specialist library staff.

⁷ Barrett, L. 2010. *Effective school libraries: evidence of impact on student achievement*. *The School Librarian*, 58 (3), pp136-139.

⁸ Seminar/ *Using the guided enquiry approach to plan effective integrated studies*/ Sharon Markless, 2009

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¹⁰ *Good school libraries: making a difference to learning*, 2006, Ofsted

Section I

33. Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make about the issues covered in this section

There is at present no provision within Key Stage 4 to give students what they need for their next stage of education. Key stage 4 is all about “teaching to the exam”. Key stage 5 requires students to have independent learning skills. Where it works well the school library is a unifying factor across all Key stages promoting enjoyment of reading. Children are better able to learn when skills are taught progressively as happens with the spiral curriculum. Likewise, independent learning skills are acquired over a period of time across a student’s academic career. But these skills are also acquired during other more pastoral activities and the best school libraries will offer pupils both of these avenues of support providing opportunities for extended and complementary studies.

Section J

34. What are the particular issues that need to be considered in phasing the introduction of the new National Curriculum in the way proposed, with programmes of study in some subjects introduced in 2013 and the rest a year later?

When planning for compulsory parts of the National Curriculum the availability of relevant resources to support the new curriculum will need to be considered.

There needs to be a rich variety of learning resources available offering both diversity and depth for each learner if they are to achieve the desired levels of differentiation. Professional advice may need to be taken at the national planning stage.

There needs to be a sufficient lead in time for school libraries to acquire the resources and if the resources do not exist, the time needed for their development will have to be accounted for.

Section K

36. Please use this space for any other evidence or views you wish to feed into the review at this stage

In the UK, 222 (top performing) schools offer their students the opportunity to take the International Baccalaureate. For a school to become an IB World School it must be authorized by the IB¹¹ before it can implement any of its programmes. One of the criteria used by International Baccalaureate that participating schools must meet is

¹¹ <http://www.ibo.org/become/guidance/> (accessed March 2011)

that the school library plays a central role in the implementation of the programme. We suggest that the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (and the Department for Education) considers similar when overseeing delivery of the new National Curriculum.

Policy & Advocacy Department
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