

## Reform of the National Curriculum in England

### Response from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

(April 2013)

#### **1. Do you have any comments on the proposed aims for the National Curriculum as a whole as set out in the framework document?**

The aims of the National Curriculum in England can only be achieved if the unique role and contribution of the school library and librarian is recognised and championed. The school library is at the heart of the school. It is a learning commons<sup>1</sup> where, through the knowledge, expertise and skills of the school librarian, children are introduced to, and taught how to access and explore for themselves, the best that has been thought and said in all the school curriculum subject areas. This has been shown to impact positively on their literacy levels, enjoyment of reading, information literacy skills, confidence and self esteem (as discussed below).

One core aim of the new curriculum is to provide an outline of core knowledge “around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons” (p6). Chartered school librarians will know of the rich variety of resources in all formats and media that are available not only in school libraries but in other libraries, archives, museums and local studies centres. They have the knowledge and skills to link resources to the curriculum and so help teachers introduce children to new learning experiences based on access to exciting content that will in turn help nurture a quest for knowledge, a love of reading and a capacity for lifelong learning. Numerous studies have concluded that a measurable improvement in children’s educational attainment is achieved when librarians play active and collaborative roles with teachers<sup>2</sup>.

Another important aim of the National Curriculum is to equip children with the knowledge to be effective citizens. CILIP firmly believes that, in order to achieve this aim, children must

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<sup>1</sup> Key to “learning commons” is the idea of collaborative working across all departments and personalised learning.

<sup>2</sup> A summary of the evidence is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/cdj6rgz>

be taught information literacy skills to enable them to access and use information in all aspects of their lives. CILIP defines information literacy as “knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner”. Without developing such skills today's children run the risk of being excluded and disenfranchised from day to day life as adults.

In 2011 the Demos report “Truth, Lies and the Internet” found that, while most school age children are confident internet users, they lack the skills to properly evaluate online information. It recommended that information literacy (referred to in the report as “digital fluency”) should become a core part of the National Curriculum and CILIP fully endorses this recommendation. Recent research has indicated that where there are qualified librarians as part of the schools professional team they are contributing to information literacy work in their school<sup>3</sup>.

**2. Do you agree that instead of detailed subject-level aims we should free teachers to shape their own curriculum aims based on the content in the programmes of study?**

Yes, so long as this is undertaken in consultation with school librarians; school librarians will ensure that the resources needed to realise the aims are available. The librarian will also support the teacher in developing/ refreshing their own knowledge of the subject.

**3. Do you have any comments on the content set out in the draft programmes of study?**

**General comments**

***The provision of library facilities:*** CILIP welcomes the call for every school to “provide library facilities” (p10). We firmly believe that, throughout their education, every child is entitled to<sup>4</sup>:

- High quality and wide-ranging library and classroom resources to support their curriculum which have been carefully selected to meet the needs of their age, learning style and ability and organised to provide easy access and availability

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<sup>3</sup> Streatfield, D, Shaper, S and Rae-Scott, S (2010) *School Libraries in the UK: a worthwhile past, a difficult present*. London: CILIP <http://bit.ly/pzndOK>

<sup>4</sup> Taken from CILIP, 2011. *School Libraries A Right* London: CILIP <http://tinyurl.com/czs8flj>

- A safe and secure library environment for learning during and outside school hours, where help, resources and advice are freely available to all
- Support from designated library staff with extensive knowledge, enthusiasm and experience to advise, encourage and inspire wider reading and reading for pleasure to ensure fair provision for all
- A skilled library practitioner with responsibility and time to help children and young people develop the skills needed to manage today's information overload, to become lifelong learners and to meet the future job market's need for problem solvers and independent thinkers

A well managed and resourced school library underpins and enriches the curriculum, supporting both teaching and learning. As stated above, a considerable number of research projects and reports have found a positive correlation between an effective school library and academic achievement<sup>5</sup>.

**Literacy:** We welcome the emphasis placed on raising literacy standards. An appropriately resourced and managed school library is key to achieving this. A recent Ofsted report noted that "the primary and secondary schools visited emphasised the school library as contributing markedly to improving literacy skills"<sup>6</sup>, while research for the School Library Commission's report found that a high performing school library plays "a powerful role" in raising pupils' literacy levels<sup>7</sup>. Librarians can develop the literacy skills of all children, especially pupils who have low levels of prior attainment:

"Our school library has been fundamental to developing the way we work with boys. We recognised many years ago that boys who arrived at secondary school with literacy needs felt alienated and found it difficult to access lessons. Research showed us the need to put into place a programme to raise literacy levels and provide a framework of behaviour interventions. The library spearheaded a reading trail structure for English lessons. We empowered the staff to take a lead, provided the

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<sup>5</sup> For a summary of the evidence see: <http://tinyurl.com/cdj6rgz>

<sup>6</sup> OFSTED., 2011 *Removing barriers to literacy* <http://bit.ly/qbsFfM>

<sup>7</sup> Douglas, J and Wilkinson, S., 2011 *School libraries: a plan for improvement. Report of the School Library Commission* <http://tinyurl.com/5sgodjt>

resources and the library went from strength to strength” – Librarian at Forest Hill School, Lewisham, London<sup>8</sup>

**Reading for pleasure:** We also welcome the specification that children should be encouraged to read for pleasure, and that this is not confined to the English curriculum. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has concluded that reading for pleasure is even more important than social class in determining academic skills. A recent Open University study has shown that, as well as enhancing children’s desire to read, the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards shadowing scheme, a scheme administered by librarians to encourage wider reading, also increases confidence in voicing views about texts, improves discussion and debating skills and fosters a wider cultural and historical awareness<sup>9</sup>.

The school library provides a safe haven for recreational reading and the professional librarian has the knowledge, skills and expertise to match pupils to reading materials that satisfies their curiosity and extends their reading habits. UK Literacy Association research carried out in schools in 2009 showed clearly that teachers do not have the up-to-date knowledge of children's books required to encourage wider reading and cannot always recommend titles that match a child’s interest and/or ability<sup>10</sup>. Teachers who may have the required knowledge do not always have the time to put this into practice. If a school is to set "ambitious expectations for reading at home” (p10), it first needs to ensure that every child has access to a wide range of appropriate, up-to-date reading resources, as many children come from homes where there are no books and/or do not have access to a public library. These resources will be provided by a good school library, which should be accessible before, during and after school hours. However, children also need access to a local library out of school hours that gives them the time, space and staff to support their reading development. The use of public libraries should be encouraged.

All subjects are underpinned by the library. Wider reading is just as important in Art and Design, Science and Citizenship, as it is in English. In their school library all children can

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Cremin, T and Swann, J., 2013. *Report to Carnegie UK Trust and CILIP on a two-stage study of the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Shadowing Scheme*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press <http://tinyurl.com/bqzvx3m>

<sup>10</sup> UKLA, 2009. *UKLA Research on Teachers as Readers*. <http://tinyurl.com/cetbxqj>

access a wide range of content spanning all disciplines, which has been selected for them by professionals.

### **Subject specific comments**

**English:** While we support the overarching aim for English in the National Curriculum – that is the promotion of high standards of literacy and the development of a love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment – we believe that this cannot be achieved without a well resourced school library managed by a chartered librarian. Books within a classroom are limited and will not provide a wide enough range for ability and interest. They are also hidden away; housing these books in a central resource, accessible to all, makes economic as well as educational sense.

We welcome the emphasis on reading and listening to whole books, rather than extracts. Library resources cater for all abilities and ages within the school, encompassing both fiction and information books from many cultures, enabling children to explore whole text independently and develop their reading for pleasure.

We also welcome recognition that, through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, spiritually and socially (p13). CILIP believes that every child has the right to be valued as an individual, having access to reading materials which are exploited by a knowledgeable person to support their emotional, cultural, leisure and wider needs. Many school librarians are endeavoring to expand the horizons of their pupils by running various cultural activities such as author visits and reading clubs.

In addition to the “spelling” and the “grammar and punctuation” appendices for English, we recommend an appendix covering the steps needed to develop the ability to evaluate and comprehend texts. This is arguably the more important aspect of reading and warrants explanation if we are to see a reduction in the number of students who can “read” out loud clearly and with correct pronunciation, but have little or no understanding of what it is they are reading.

**Science:** Librarians are experts in guiding students in evaluating and using sources of information wisely. Not only can they encourage pupils to be curious and ask questions about scientific discovery, they have the information literacy skills to teach children how to frame their own questions and to assess the validity of the resources they unearth and the

sources they use during the course of their own scientific inquiry. Encouraging wider reading for pleasure is as important within science as it is within English.

**Citizenship:** The variety of resources that children need access to in order to acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of, for example, how the United Kingdom is governed, its political system and how laws are shaped and enforced will only be found in the library.

**Computing:** CILIP agrees that a computing education should ensure that pupils become digitally literate, but we do not believe that the proposed programme of study will deliver this. While we agree that children should be taught aspects of e-safety at Key Stage 1 and learn how to evaluate digital content at Key Stage 2, we are concerned that this is not being developed in Stages 3 and 4. The Demos Report, “Truth, Lies and the Internet”, warned, for example, that teenagers often regard conspiracy theories as based on fact and are unable to see through hate or extremist sites<sup>11</sup>. Children have to be equipped with the tools necessary to navigate the internet safely if they are to grow into well rounded citizens, so we strongly recommend that digitally literacy is taught at each Key Stage.

E-safety issues are part of the much wider remit of teaching information literacy skills and school librarians have a definite role to play in educating pupils – and the wider school community - about internet safety, including the safe use of social media for learning and for life. Many school librarians are already very active in this area, recognising that children are best protected when they are given access to the internet, whilst at the same time being taught how to differentiate the good from the bad. Miller and Bartlett (2012) concluded that “school librarians and the Information Literacy community are so important to the future of digital fluency” (p52)<sup>12</sup>.

**History:** We believe that a better balance needs to be struck within the history curriculum between the different aspects of history. National and sometimes international history is included in the content but there is much less local history, which is unfortunate. Local history has a real power to engage pupils and help them to connect with the past and

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<sup>11</sup> Bartlett, J and Miller, C., 2011. *Truth, lies and the internet*. London: Demos.  
<http://tinyurl.com/64296ok>

<sup>12</sup> Miller, C. and Bartlett, J. 2012. ‘Digital fluency’: towards young people’s critical use of the internet. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 6(2), pp. 35-55.

should therefore have a secure place in the curriculum at all Key Stages. Changes to the curriculum in recent years, especially at Key Stage 3, have introduced more local history as part of pupils' studies of national history, such as the Industrial Revolution. This local dimension is often very engaging for students, who have an instant connection with familiar places that leads to a greater interest in and desire to learn about their history. There is a wide range of stimuli held in the local studies collections of many libraries and museums to nurture these interests and desires. Local studies librarians and other Heritage Education Officers have the required knowledge of their collections and of the curriculum to enable them to develop activities that enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of the period of history they are studying, whilst at the same time advancing other core skills:

“Pupils from a school in Swindon prepare for their annual GCSE history visit to the First World War battlefields and cemeteries by visiting their local archive to research soldiers from their town who fought and died in France. They do this because the students then feel a connection with the young men who trod familiar streets, attended local schools and worked in local shops and factories. When visiting France they find the grave of the soldier they researched and place a poppy on the grave. As one young man stood at the grave of the soldier he had researched, he realised for the first time that history is about real people who lived real lives” – submission from Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.

Given the sheer quantity of content in the new Key Stage 2 and 3 curriculum, we are concerned that pupils will not have sufficient time to develop a clear understanding of how their local area has developed.

We also have concerns about resourcing the new curriculum. Young people can be inspired by having access to original material and it can engage some pupils who otherwise do not engage with formal learning. However, changes to the curriculum threaten this by placing an emphasis on political and constitutional history over social and local and by changing the content to exclusively pre-1707. Few local museums have strong collections in this area because less survives from this period. The documents that do survive are either written in Latin or very difficult to read, effectively limiting the engagement of archives with primary schools. Teachers will have to rely almost exclusively on secondary sources, giving a recipe

for text book based learning of dates and facts that will disengage both pupils and teachers from this important curriculum subject.

In addition we believe that too little emphasis is given within the new curriculum to the critical thinking skills that a historian requires, or to the other historical skills that pupils should develop when studying this subject. The emphasis on content over skills is regrettable. Comprehension and interrogation of a wide range of sources - including primary objects, documents, photographs and films managed by local studies librarians – an understanding of bias and the development of historical empathy are life skills that are valuable to students throughout their education and in the workplace.

**Languages:** The new reading requirements for Languages have implications for school librarians. If pupils are required to “read literary texts in the languages, including stories, poems, songs and letters (p175)” the library should have adequate resources to enable the necessary materials to be purchased or licensed.

**4. Does the content set out in the draft programmes of study represent a sufficiently ambitious level of challenge for pupils at each key stage?**

No comment.

**5. Do you have any comments on the proposed wording of the attainment targets?**

No comment.

**6. Do you agree that the draft programmes of study provide for effective progression between the key stages?**

CILIP recommends that the role of the library and librarian in assisting progression between Key Stages is recognised by making explicit reference to it in each programme of study. With proper leadership and engagement the library experience stretches across a child’s life. Our submission to the School Library Commission’s Lines of Enquiry cites examples of library staff visiting primary schools as part of the transition process, and librarians developing a Transition Curriculum for Year 7 pupils that delivers transferable skills that pupils can use across the curriculum, such as research skills<sup>13</sup>. Once in secondary schools, school libraries continue to provide opportunities for extended and complimentary studies that aid progression between Key Stages, and librarians have the expertise to develop the

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<sup>13</sup> CILIP, 2010. *Response of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) to the School Library Commission’s Lines of Enquiry* London: CILIP <http://tinyurl.com/ctm9wy6>

independent learning skills pupils need to succeed throughout their school life and beyond. School librarians also build links with the public library service to support children's learning outside the classroom.

Information literacy is central to the university learning experience, yet research has demonstrated the existence of a skills gap, with students arriving at university lacking the information literacy skills required to locate and engage with resources such as academic journals<sup>14</sup>. School librarians can bridge this gap by teaching the skills that enable students to find, evaluate and synthesise information from a range of sources that are relevant to their chosen disciplines once they progress beyond secondary education.

**7. Do you agree that we should change the subject information and communication technology to computing, to reflect the content of the new programmes of study?**

Please refer to our comments under question 3. While we agree that "computing" does better reflect the content of the new programme of study, we have concerns about this content as not enough time is allowed for the teaching of important digital literacy skills.

**8. Does the new National Curriculum embody an expectation of higher standards for all children?**

While we agree that the new National Curriculum does embody an expectation of higher standards for all children, to realise this expectation CILIP believes that children have a right to high quality and wide-ranging library resources that have been carefully selected by chartered librarians to meet the needs of age, learning style and ability.

**9. What impact - either positive or negative - will our proposals have on the 'protected characteristic' groups?**

The school librarian "democratises knowledge" by providing a neutral space where all cultural heritage is acknowledged and celebrated.

The School Library Commission's report reiterated that different learners within the same community will require different types of support in accessing knowledge and information. The consumption of media is related to ethnic background, gender and social class, for example, and the experience of literacy is influenced by socioeconomic backgrounds, with

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<sup>14</sup> Cited in Waller, R et al (2013) *Developing the Information Literacy Skills of New Students: Bridging the Gap Between School and University*. Keele: Keele University <http://tinyurl.com/cjj9ofd>

children on free school meals less likely to own their own books<sup>15</sup>. The standards set by the new National Curriculum therefore impact on children from “protected characteristic” groups in different ways and the school librarian can address this by offering resources aimed at specific groups and by developing more personalised and differentiated services for these groups, as recommended in the Commission’s report.

**10. To what extent will the new National Curriculum make clear to parents what their children should be learning at each stage of their education?**

The National Curriculum needs to make it clear to parents that reading widely and frequently is a high priority in all subjects and that librarians have a key role to play in supporting this due to their extensive knowledge of children’s literature and other information sources.

CILIP agrees that children achieve better outcomes when parents are engaged in their education. Whilst the new National Curriculum will help parents to understand what their children should know and be able to do at different stages of their education, a designated library professional plays a key role in advising parents and carers about choosing reading materials, how to access additional resources to enhance learning and how to use these resources with their children.

**11. What key factors will affect schools’ ability to implement the new National Curriculum successfully from September 2014?**

A National Curriculum provides school librarians with an agreed focus on what is being taught and what resources they need to provide in order to support and extend learning. A key factor in a schools’ ability to implement the new National Curriculum will therefore be influenced by the level of resourcing and staffing provided for its library. The school library has to be able to support the new programmes of study for each subject and stock sufficient material for wider reading. As stated above (q3), consideration also has to be given to the practical opportunities for young people to handle primary sources in subjects such as history.

**12. Who is best placed to support schools and/or develop resources that schools will need to teach the new National Curriculum?**

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<sup>15</sup> Douglas, J and Wilkinson, S., 2011 *School libraries: a plan for improvement. Report of the School Library Commission* <http://tinyurl.com/5sgodjt>

A chartered school librarian is very well placed to support schools and develop and exploit the resources – in all media - that schools will need to teach the new National Curriculum. CILIP believes that every schools teaching team is entitled to a designated library professional who understands the curriculum and support it with managed resources. We also believe that library staff should collaborate with teaching staff on curriculum planning and development and be involved in teaching.

**13. Do you agree that we should amend the legislation to disapply the National Curriculum programmes of study, attainment targets and statutory assessment arrangements, as set out in section 12 of the consultation document?**

No comment.

**14. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the proposals in this consultation?**

No comment.