

## **THEMATIC PROBE. Primary Education: an International Perspective**

### **Country Description: England**

This country description was compiled from the *INCA* Archive ([www.inca.org.uk](http://www.inca.org.uk)).

#### **1. Organisation of school phases=**

<b><i>How are the early years and primary phases organised? (3-5yrs? 5-11yrs?)</i></b>
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In England education is compulsory from the age of five to the age of 16. Children must start compulsory primary education the term after they reach the age of five years. Until this time, children may be educated in early years settings, such as nursery schools or nursery classes in primary schools. Early years education, which is not compulsory and lasts from the age of three until the time compulsory primary education begins, is known as the *foundation stage*. All parents of four-year-old children who would like their child to be in some form of *foundation stage* provision must be provided with a free (that is, government-funded) place, which is at least part-time.

Although compulsory primary education does not begin until the term after a child reaches the age of five, many primary schools admit children at the age of four. These children enter what are known as *reception classes*, which are part of the *foundation stage*. There is a specific *foundation stage* curriculum with identified ‘early learning goals’.

Compulsory primary education comprises two cycles or stages which are known as *key stages*. *Key stage 1* includes children in Years 1 and 2 of compulsory education, aged five to seven years, and *key stage 2* those in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 (aged seven to 11 years). These *key stages* are the same whatever the local school organisation and irrespective of local school transfer ages.

Primary education can be provided in primary schools catering for both *key stages* together, or in separate schools for each age group or *key stage*, known as *infant schools* for *key stage 1* and *junior schools* for *key stage 2*.

In some areas there is a three-tier system consisting of *first schools*, *middle schools* and secondary schools, where *middle schools* normally provide a four-year course for children aged between eight and 12 years, or nine and 13 years.

Publicly-funded primary schools (known as *maintained schools*) are generally co-educational.

In sum, compulsory primary education may be provided in:

Primary schools	<i>Infant schools</i>	<i>Junior schools</i>	<i>First schools in the middle school system</i>
<i>Key stages 1 and 2</i>	<i>Key stage 1</i>	<i>Key stage 2</i>	<i>Key stage 1 and part of key stage 2</i>
Ages 5*-11	Aged 5*-7 years	Ages 7-11	Aged 5*-8/9

\* Many schools admit children at the age of four - see above.

### ***What are the points of transfer between phases?***

Primary school children usually transfer to secondary education at the age of 11 years.

Pre-compulsory <i>foundation stage</i>	Compulsory primary phase	Compulsory secondary phase
Aged 3-5	Age range 5-11	Aged 11-16

## **2. Locus of control**

### ***What degree of control over curriculum content and other aspects of primary schools exists at the national, regional, local and school levels?***

#### General

Education in England is characterised by its decentralised nature. Responsibility for different aspects of the service is shared between central government (the Department for Education and Skills, DfES), local government, churches and other voluntary bodies, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession. Central authorities have the power to intervene if individual local education authorities (LEAs) or the governing bodies of educational institutions do not discharge their duties satisfactorily.

Overall responsibility for all aspects of education in England lies with the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

#### Finance

The provision of publicly-financed education in what are known as *maintained schools* in England has traditionally been the responsibility of local councils which have designated responsibility as local education authorities (LEAs). Most publicly-funded schools are maintained by LEAs, or LEAs and a founding body, such as a religious organisation.

Local education authorities meet their expenditure partly from locally raised revenue and partly from general grants received from central government (via the Department for Education and Skills, DfES).

Most LEA-*maintained schools* receive 100 per cent funding for both current and capital expenditure. Schools which are maintained by the LEA and the founding body (known as *voluntary-aided schools*) usually receive 100 per cent funding for recurrent

costs and 85 per cent funding for capital expenditure through the LEA; the remainder is the responsibility of the founding body.

For *LEA-maintained schools*, the responsibility for financial and related administration, maintenance of schools, and the appointment, management, appraisal and dismissal of teachers has been delegated from LEAs to the school governing bodies of the individual schools.

### Curriculum

The statutory requirements of the compulsory National Curriculum are laid down by central government, via the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Generally, all publicly-funded primary schools must provide the National Curriculum to their students. The National Curriculum does not, however, constitute the whole curriculum for schools, even though it is an important element of the school curriculum. Schools are expected to develop a whole school curriculum, which incorporates the full requirements of the National Curriculum, whilst also offering additional learning and other experiences to students which reflect their particular needs and circumstances.

Additionally, the National Curriculum (2000) documentation makes clear that the National Curriculum should be used as a framework by schools. Consequently, it is a matter for schools to decide how much time the National Curriculum should take.

Generally, in private primary schools in England, the curriculum and its assessment are the responsibility of the governors of the school and are not subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

***Are there any shifts in the distribution of control between these different levels? (Is it possible to assign percentages to each level, to reflect circumstances in each country?)***

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

***At what intervals is the curriculum reviewed? (eg are there established review cycles?)***

There is no established cycle for curriculum review. Part of the remit of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is to maintain, develop and monitor the school curriculum. This is a continuous process.

The statutory National Curriculum in England began to be introduced in 1988. Following a review in 1993, a revised curriculum was introduced in 1995. The most recent major revision of the National Curriculum was completed and began to be introduced in schools in England in August 2000.

### 3. Curriculum content

#### ***What does the statutory curriculum consist of?***

NOTE: Children who enter primary school before they reach compulsory school age - that is those, aged four to five, in *reception classes* who are therefore in the *foundation stage* of education (see above) - follow the *foundation stage* curriculum. This probe provides information regarding the curriculum for children from the beginning of compulsory primary education only; that is, it does not make explicit reference to the requirements of the *foundation stage* curriculum.

The basic curriculum in primary education in England consists of the National Curriculum and religious education (see below).

It should be noted, however, that the statutory National Curriculum does not constitute the whole curriculum for schools; rather it is an important element of the school curriculum. The school curriculum comprises all the learning and other experiences that each school plans for its students and schools have discretion to develop the whole curriculum to reflect their particular needs and circumstances.

The National Curriculum at *key stage* 1 (children aged five to seven years) and *key stage* 2 (aged seven to 11) comprises:

- the core subjects of  
English;  
mathematics; and  
science;

and

- the foundation subjects -  
design & technology;  
information and communication technology (ICT);  
history;  
geography;  
art and design;  
music; and  
physical education (PE).

The National Curriculum applies to all children in compulsory primary education in *maintained schools* in England. Students with special educational needs (SEN), whether in mainstream schools or special schools, are expected to have the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education and consequently have an entitlement to an education that includes part or all of the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum, or sections of it, may, however, be completely disapplied for such students.

***What other aspects of the curriculum/teaching in schools are statutory?  
Are time allocations for subjects statutory?***

**Religious education and collective worship**

All *maintained schools* in England (except nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools) are required to provide religious education and a daily act of collective worship. At the request of a parent, any child in a publicly-funded primary school in England may, however, be excused from these activities.

All local education authorities (LEAs) are required to adopt a locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Denominational schools - that is, schools run by a particular religious denomination - are exempt from this agreed syllabus framework. Local education authorities must review their religious education syllabuses every five years.

All local religious education syllabuses must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. The majority of acts of collective worship are similarly required to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.

In addition, all LEAs are required to establish a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The SACRE may require the LEA to review its locally agreed syllabus for religious education and has a role in supporting the effective provision of religious education and collective worship in schools. Each SACRE must comprise representatives from several groups including local religious groups, teachers' associations and school governing bodies.

Headteachers may apply for the requirement for broadly Christian worship to be lifted for some or all students, if this requirement appears to be inappropriate for the whole school or for a particular category of students. Applications are made to the local SACRE. At the request of parents, religious education and worship may be provided according to a particular faith or denomination, provided that denominational worship does not replace statutory non-denominational collective worship and the school does not incur additional costs.

**Key skills**

Key skills in England are identified as the skills needed to succeed in work, education and everyday life, and these key skills are embedded in the National Curriculum. There are six key skills:

- communication;
- application of number;
- information technology;
- working with others;
- improving own learning and performance; and
- problem solving.

### Thinking skills

'Thinking skills', which complement the above six key skills, are also embedded in the revised National Curriculum introduced in August 2000. It is intended that these should enable children to focus on 'knowing how' as well as 'knowing what', that is, enabling them to learn how to learn. There are five thinking skills:

- information processing skills;
- reasoning skills;
- enquiry skills;
- creative thinking skills; and
- evaluation skills.

### Time allocation

The prescription of the amount of time to be devoted to each compulsory National Curriculum subject is formally prohibited by law, and there is no fixed number of lessons per week. Indeed, the National Curriculum (2000) documentation makes clear that the National Curriculum should be used as a framework by schools. Consequently, it is a matter for schools to decide how much time the National Curriculum should take. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has, however, produced a guidance document on organising the curriculum in primary schools. *Designing and Timetabling the Primary Curriculum – a practical guide for key stages 1 & 2* is available at [http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/learning\\_prim\\_curr.asp](http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/learning_prim_curr.asp).

In addition, the Government recommends minimum weekly lesson times of 21 hours for children aged five to seven years (in *key stage 1*), and 23.5 hours for students aged seven to 11 years (*key stage 2*).

The revised National Curriculum also recommends that, in all *key stages*, schools should devote two hours a week to physical activity, including the National Curriculum for physical education and extra-curricular activities.

### Homework

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has published recommended guidelines for the amount of time each week which children in primary phase education in England should be spending on homework. This documentation recommends that children in *key stage 1* should receive an hour a week of homework; those in Years 3 and 4 of primary education (aged seven to nine) 90 minutes per week; and students in the final two years of primary level education (aged nine to 11) should receive 30 minutes' homework each day.

<b><i>Are there statutory timings for the length of the school day/week?</i></b>
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The school year consists of 380 (half-day) sessions. The actual dates of terms and holidays are determined annually by the local education authority (LEA) Education Committee in consultation with the school governing bodies of LEA-maintained schools. In general, the school year runs from about the first week of September to the third week of July. It is divided into three terms, with a long summer break of about

six weeks in July and August, shorter breaks of two to three weeks at Christmas and Easter, and one week in the middle of each term.

The school week normally runs from Monday to Friday.

The school day is divided into two sessions, one in the morning (usually between 9 am and 12 noon) and one in the afternoon (usually between around 1 pm and 3.30 pm). There is no fixed number of lessons per week. Recommended minimum weekly lesson times (excluding breaks and collective worship) are 21 hours for students aged five to seven years (in *key stage 1*), and 23.5 hours for students aged seven to 11 years (*key stage 2*).

Although three-term academic years are the norm in education in England, some local education authorities are considering the introduction of four- five- or six-term years and some pilot schemes are currently underway. Five-term years, for example, would involve five eight-week terms separated by a four-week summer break and other 14-day holidays. It is argued that shorter summer holidays and more even terms would reduce summer learning loss and allow for modular curriculum planning, improved assessment and a more regular pace of learning.

An independent commission has recently recommended that local education authorities should switch to a six-term year by 2005. This move would aim to create a standardised, yet flexible framework with two terms before Christmas each year, and no term of more than 38 days (seven-and-a-half-weeks). There would be a two-week break in October, a Christmas break of a minimum of two weeks and the four terms after Christmas would be limited to a maximum of six weeks each. In addition, the summer break would always be more than five weeks in length.

***What changes have there been to the statutory/non-statutory elements of the curriculum?***

Since the introduction of the revised National Curriculum in August 2000, all publicly-funded primary schools in England have been provided with a joint framework for a broad programme of citizenship and personal, social and health education. This non-statutory framework sets out what children might be expected to know and be able to do, but leaves details of content and delivery to schools. The aim is for seven-year-olds to know the difference between right and wrong; consider simple social and moral dilemmas; learn to share and cooperate; be able to recognise their likes, dislikes and justify their opinions; name and manage their feelings; and understand that bullying is wrong. By 11 years of age, children should study current affairs, basic law and democracy, discuss topical issues, as well as understand puberty and the consequences of racism and bullying.

***What government/other initiatives have been introduced? What has been their impact?***

**National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS)**

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were launched in September 1998 and 1999 respectively with a view to raising the standards of education of all primary age children in these key areas.

Although the strategies are not statutory, the large majority of primary schools in England follow their recommendations, which are that a minimum of one hour each day should be dedicated to literacy and, up to one hour per day, in addition, to the teaching of mathematics.

In this connection, literacy and numeracy summer school initiatives have also been launched, whereby primary (and secondary) school children having difficulty in English and/or mathematics are provided with at least 50 hours of state-funded tuition during the summer holiday period (July-September).

Funding has also been made available for 'booster revision classes' to enable 11-year-old students to improve their mathematics and reading skills prior to taking the end of *key stage 2* tests (see below).

See section 5. Assessment, below for information regarding national targets.

***What other trends are emerging in curriculum development? (eg new subjects/areas of learning being introduced)***

**Modern foreign languages in primary education**

Although learning a modern foreign language in England does not become compulsory until the beginning of *key stage 3* (students aged 11+), the Government encourages the optional learning of a foreign language prior to this stage. A National Advisory Centre on Early Language Learning (NACELL) has been launched - <http://www.nacell.org.uk> and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has also produced a scheme of work for those schools teaching modern foreign languages at *key stage 2* - see [http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes/primary\\_mfl/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes/primary_mfl/).

In early 2002, the Government launched a consultation document on the future of education for 14- to 19-year-olds in England. This Green Paper entitled *14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards* also proposes improving foreign language learning in England by, amongst other measures:

- **giving every child the right to learn a language at primary level by 2012;**  
and
- raising the number of primary school teachers trained to teach languages.

See <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19greenpaper/> for full details.

***What other levers may be having an impact on curriculum content? (eg international studies: PIRLS, IEA, PISA, TIMSS)***

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

#### **4. Organisation of the curriculum**

***What are the common features of curriculum organisation in the primary phase? (single subjects? planning subjects as 'topics'?)***

At primary level in particular, teaching does not necessarily have to be organised and delivered within subject boundaries; teachers often organise their work in an integrated way, using thematic work as a way to teach several subjects at once.

Some examples of primary curriculum/timetable organisation are provided in the publication previously referred to - *Designing and Timetabling the Primary Curriculum – a practical guide for key stages 1 & 2*.

***How are subjects labelled?***

The subjects of the National Curriculum are known either as 'core subjects' or 'foundation subjects' (see above).

***What examples are there of 'areas' rather than subjects?***

***What examples are there of clusters of subjects (eg Humanities, made up of geography and history) being brought together?***

No specific additional information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

***What are the common features of timetabling? (eg weekly lessons in each subject, English and mathematics taught daily)***

##### **Daily English and mathematics**

Although the amount of time to be allocated to each curriculum subject is not officially prescribed, recent moves to ensure that literacy and numeracy are given priority in primary schools in England, via the non-statutory Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (see above), have resulted in the large majority of primary schools dedicating one hour every day to the teaching of reading and writing, and up to one hour each day to the teaching of mathematics.

Further information is available via *Designing and Timetabling the Primary Curriculum – a practical guide for key stages 1 & 2* (available at [http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/learning\\_prim\\_curr.asp](http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/learning_prim_curr.asp)).

## 5. Assessment

***What is the purpose, nature and scale of assessment? (eg end of phase assessment, statutory, published test results, optional, national, local, timed tests, teacher-assessment)***

There is no (national) certificate awarded to students on completion of primary education in England. There is, however, a system of national assessment, which includes:

### Assessment on school entry

#### ***Baseline assessment - to 2002***

A national system of assessment on school entry - known as *baseline assessment* - became compulsory in September 1998. As a result, all publicly-funded primary schools in England were required to adopt an accredited *baseline assessment* scheme, drawn up in accordance with criteria approved by the Department for Education and Skills, DfES, and selected from a list of 90 schemes accredited for *baseline assessment* by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The main purpose of compulsory *baseline assessment* schemes was that they should facilitate an assessment of each child's knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills on entry to compulsory primary education. Assessment took place within seven weeks of children starting school, regardless of whether they started at compulsory school age, five, or, at four in the *reception class*, and regardless of whether they attended full-or part-time. Assessment was carried out by a child's normal teacher with the aim of making it seem like part of an everyday classroom activity.

*Baseline assessment* was intended to:

- allow teachers to plan the curriculum appropriately (both for a class and for individual children);
- provide learning activities to match a child's needs and assist in developing a child's potential;
- assist in the identification of problems requiring extra attention early on; and
- provide a starting point from which a child's progress through *key stage* 1 could be measured.

*Baseline assessment* also provided a reference point for the measurement of school performance.

#### **The *Foundation Stage Profile* from the 2002-03 school year**

In September 2001, the Government announced proposals to replace the *baseline assessment* scheme with a new, single national scheme for summing up the progress and learning needs of children at the end of the *foundation stage* (that is, on entry to compulsory primary education, the term after they reach the age of five). This scheme, to be known as the *Foundation Stage Profile*, will be introduced from the 2002/2003 school year, and will replace the current system of assessing children in the first few weeks of their entering compulsory education (see above).

The *Foundation Stage* Profile will reflect the curriculum guidance for the *foundation stage* and the early learning goals that are determined for this phase of education (there are six covering personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development).

The *Foundation Stage* Profile will be completed for all children in publicly-funded settings who reach the end of the *foundation stage* in that setting, including those in nursery units and *reception classes*, as well as those in primary schools. A Profile will be completed for each child during the second half of the summer term. It will sum up each child's progress and learning needs in relation to the early learning goals at the end of the *foundation stage* and will be based on practitioners' ongoing observations and assessments. The Profile will include all six areas of learning. Exemplification of achievement will be wide and integral to the scheme. There will be no requirement to carry out any formal assessment activities. A pack of optional activities, which demonstrate a range of good observational assessment opportunities is being developed and trialled. The system will be underpinned by a system of moderation to ensure the validity and reliability of practitioners' judgements.

### National Curriculum assessment

Assessment arrangements constitute a formal part of the National Curriculum. Statutory teacher assessment and statutory testing take place in relation to the National Curriculum Subject Orders, and therefore aim to chart students' attainment in those subjects. Although the tests, as opposed to teacher assessment, can cover only a limited range within each subject, they do still set out to provide a valid assessment of that range. They are therefore curriculum-based tests. This makes them different in character from either intelligence tests or aptitude tests. They set out to assess children's achievement, rather than their potential.

National Curriculum assessment is measured against attainment targets. These define the expected standards of student performance and provide the basis for judging students' attainment in particular aspects of a subject at the end of each *key stage*.

There is a distinction between everyday teacher assessment which is formative, carried out as a normal function of teaching and learning; and end of *key stage* teacher assessment, which is summative.

The purpose of formative assessment (or 'assessment for learning' as it is increasingly becoming known) is to provide detailed information about students' attainment, so that future learning can be targeted appropriately and students helped to make progress.

Results from summative end of *key stage* tests and assessments aim to provide schools and parents with easily intelligible information about individual students' attainment. This needs to be in relation to both national standards (that is, National Curriculum criteria) and national performance (that is, distribution of results). In other words, the results are intended to provide important information for parents and the public to help them judge the quality of the education being provided.

Statutory assessment applies to *maintained schools* (publicly-funded schools) only. Privately-funded schools are encouraged, but not required, to take part in the assessment arrangements at the end of *key stages* 1 and 2.

**National Curriculum assessment at the end of *key stage* 1 (aged seven)**

In general, all children in their final year of *key stage* 1 (normally in Year 2 and aged seven by the end of the school year) are assessed.

The statutory assessment arrangements for the end of *key stage* 1 cover the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and consist of teacher assessment and national tests and tasks (the latter in English and mathematics, not science). Teacher assessment and statutory tasks and tests have equal status and are intended to give complementary information about students' attainment. The tests show what students have achieved in selected parts of a subject at the end of the *key stage*. Teacher assessment is a judgement of performance in the whole subject over time, based on observations of practical and oral work in the classroom and written work completed in class over the course of the *key stage*.

The tasks and tests are administered and marked by the school according to the guidance supplied with the task and test materials. Marked papers are externally audited.

**Statutory assessment at the end of *key stage* 2 (11 years)**

In general, all children in their final year of *key stage* 2 (normally in Year 6 and aged 11 by the end of the school year) are assessed by teacher assessment in all compulsory National Curriculum subjects and by national tests in English, mathematics and science. However, statutory assessment for *key stage* 2 children working below level 3 of the eight-level National Curriculum scale (where the expected level is level 4 at age 11, see below) is through teacher assessment alone. These children need not be tested, although classroom-based tasks are made available to schools on an optional basis to support teacher assessment.

Unlike the *key stage* 1 tests, the National Curriculum *key stage* 2 tests are externally marked.

National tests at the end of *key stage* 2 are not used to assess the ability or aptitude of students for the purpose of selection for secondary school. Wholly selective secondary schools (commonly known as *grammar schools*) set their own tests for this purpose, and these are usually administered earlier in the school year than the *key stage* 2 tests. All students continue to secondary education, regardless of the outcome of the end of *key stage* 2 assessment.

Level descriptions in the National Curriculum are the basis for judging children's levels of attainment (against the National Curriculum attainment targets) at the end of the *key stage*. These are summary statements that indicate the types and range of performance which children working at a particular level of the National Curriculum should characteristically demonstrate. Since their introduction in 1995, teachers have had to judge which level 'best fits' a student's performance. There are eight level

descriptions for each attainment target of the National Curriculum. Seven-year-olds are typically expected to achieve level 2, and 11-year-olds, level 4.

All assessments are criterion-referenced. There are no quotas set for each of the National Curriculum levels. There are no underlying assumptions about the proportion of students who should be at any particular level. Proportions are determined entirely by how students' attainments measure up to the standards of the National Curriculum.

The results from National Curriculum teacher assessment in *key stages* 1 and 2 are reported alongside the task/test results.

When the National Curriculum assessment arrangements were introduced, the (then) Department of Education and Science (DES) (now the Department for Education and Skills, DfES) emphasised that there was no intention that students should be kept down (in the same class) or moved up (to the next class) on the grounds of how they performed in the formal assessments alone.

The tasks and tests are designed to be accessible to the vast majority of children, including those with special educational needs (SEN). Special arrangements for the administration of the tests may be appropriate for some such children who may, for example be unable to sit and work at a test for a sustained period, or for children for whom English is an additional language. Braille and modified large print papers are also available. A very small number of children, including those with chronic and severe illness, may be unable to take the tests, even when these have been adapted or other special arrangements have been made.

Primary school performance tables, based on the results of National Curriculum assessment at the end of *key stage 2*, have been published since March 1997. These are intended to provide parents with the information to enable them to choose the best and most appropriate school for their children. The tables list, for each school, the percentage of eligible students achieving level 4 or above (of the National Curriculum eight-level scale), and the percentage of eligible students who were absent or disapplied. Percentages are shown for the test results and for teacher assessment for each subject (English, mathematics and science). The tables are intended to enable parents to make straightforward objective comparisons of local primary schools based on how successful their students have been in English, mathematics and science at age 11, in tests and teacher assessment.

Results of children who have recently arrived from overseas, and who have difficulties with the English language, are not published in the above tables. This applies to students from overseas whose first language is not English and who were admitted to an English school for the first time on or after the start of Year 5, aged nine. (Year 6 is the final year of compulsory primary education.)

Schools also have to set targets for the performance of their students in National Curriculum assessment at the end of *key stage 2* and must publish (in their prospectus and in the annual report to parents of the school governors) the school's performance against these targets. The targets are expected to be set (and published) on the basis of

the percentage of students the school anticipates will achieve level 4 or above (of the National Curriculum eight-level scale) in the National Curriculum tests.

Performance data in the form of end of *key stage 2* test results accompany students as they leave primary education and enter lower secondary school. Software has been developed for the electronic transfer of such data between schools and for the diagnostic analysis of children's responses in the end of *key stage 2* tests. In this way it is intended that the results inform the teaching staff responsible for new secondary school entrants and so ease the transition from primary to secondary education.

The Government has set the following targets for attainment in mathematics and English in the end of *key stage 2* tests for 2004:

- 85 per cent of all children to reach the expected standard for their age in English and mathematics.
- 35 per cent of children to reach above the expected standard for their age in English and mathematics.

### **Optional National Curriculum tests at ages 8, 9 and 10**

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has developed standardised tests in English and mathematics for use with children at the end of Years 3, 4 and 5, ages eight, nine and 10 respectively. These tests, which are optional for each year group, aim to give schools a clear notion of whether students are on target to do well in the statutory tests at the end of *key stage 2*, and to support schools in monitoring children's progress during the *key stage*.

Schools use the optional tests for a number of purposes. These include reporting to parents and evaluating progress made by children since the end of the previous year, or since statutory assessment at the end of *key stage 1*. Many also use them to diagnose both strengths and weaknesses across a class and of individuals. This can assist in setting targets for progress in the future.

The optional tests consist of papers in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics and mental arithmetic. Students take the exams under test conditions and are timed.

### **World class tests at age 9**

In addition, 'world class tests' have recently been made available for the most able nine-year-olds in primary education. The tests, which measure performance in mathematics and problem solving (in mathematics, science, and design technology) are part paper-based, part computer-based. Although broadly targeted at nine-year-olds (there are additional world class tests for 13-year-olds in secondary level education), students can take the tests as soon as they are judged ready. The tests for nine-year-olds last 60 minutes each, and each requires students to apply creative thinking and logic, by demonstrating their ability to process and respond to unfamiliar information and communicate their thought processes coherently. The problem solving tests require some mathematical, scientific or technological knowledge. However, the emphasis is on a student's ability to solve a problem that they will not have studied at school. It is about drawing on a student's knowledge and coupling that with individual thinking. In the mathematics tests, students apply what they have

learned to new situations and use their thinking skills to solve unfamiliar problems. World class tests are part of a broader government initiative *Excellence in Cities*, which is aimed at improving the achievements of children with an initial focus on key city areas. Further information is available via the World Class Arena website at <http://www.worldclassarena.org>.

The stated purpose of the world class tests is:

To recognise, record and benchmark the individual achievement and ability of the top 10 per cent of nine- (and 13-) year-old children in mathematics and/or problem solving, matching the achievements of the best 10 per cent of nine- (and 13-) year-old children in the best performing countries, as identified by international surveys, and to provide a formal recognition of that achievement.

***How far is the curriculum driven by assessments? (eg evidence of teacher preparation for testing, 'booster' or 'catch-up' classes in schools)***

Booster (revision) classes are organised in many primary schools and funding has been made available via central government for these. In most schools where such classes are organised, these usually take place in the weeks running up to the national *key stage 2* tests (held in May) and are targeted at those children who are performing just below the level expected (level 4 of the National Curriculum eight-level scale).

## **6. Teaching profession/training**

***What changes can be identified in initial teacher training programmes?***

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

***What kinds of continuing professional development/on-going training are provided?***

When baseline (school entry) assessment was introduced in September 1998 (see above), teacher training was provided. Such training usually covered:

- administering the scheme, including procedures, where needed, for standardising the assessment;
- using the outcomes of the assessments to inform teachers' planning for both the class and individuals within it; and
- discussing the outcomes of the assessment with parents.

Similar training is being provided for teachers with regard to the *Foundation Stage Profile*.

Similarly, when other new government initiatives are introduced, such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, training is provided (see below).

**To what degree are teachers'/schools' planning subject to scrutiny?**

As part of the regular Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection process, teachers'/schools' planning is subject to detailed scrutiny by a team of inspectors over the days of the inspection. (Anecdotal note from Probe compiler.)

**To what degree are teachers using electronic formats to plan?**

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

## 7. Pedagogy

**Which teaching approaches are dominant or developing a higher profile, and which are receding? (eg collaborative work, whole-class instruction)**

There are some recommended teaching approaches in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These are not detailed in *INCA* but are accessible via the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy websites. See:

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/> and  
<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/numeracy/>.

Detailed teaching frameworks and training materials have been provided by the Government for both of these initiatives. Although not statutory, these frameworks are used by the large majority of primary schools in England. In mathematics, for example, the framework places a strong focus on mental arithmetic, including children learning their times tables, and on whole class teaching in which every child is fully engaged.

**What is the impact of ICT in teaching practice? (eg use of electronic whiteboards, intranets, managed learning environments/local grids)**

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

**To what degree are teaching approaches focusing on developing thinking skills, creativity and building on children's learning styles?**

Thinking skills are embedded in the revised National Curriculum introduced in August 2000. It is intended that these should enable children to focus on 'knowing how' as well as 'knowing what', that is, enabling them to learn how to learn. The thinking skills are information processing skills; reasoning skills; enquiry skills; creative thinking skills; and evaluation skills.

See also World class tests at age 9 above.

## 8. Resourcing

**How far are resources to support teaching made available via government/central/local agencies?**

### National Curriculum

There is an official National Curriculum website at <http://www.nc.uk.net>. This provides online access to the National Curriculum programmes of study at all *key stages* and for all subjects, and provides links to relevant teaching resources.

In addition, in September 2001, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) launched the National Curriculum in Action website. The site is designed primarily for teachers and senior managers working in schools. It uses children's work and case study material as examples of what the National Curriculum looks like in practice, and aims to show:

- the standard of children's work at different ages and *key stages*;
- how the programmes of study translate into real activities.

The site is accessible at <http://www.ncaction.org.uk/>.

### Online schemes of work

Teachers generally use the programmes of study for each subject area of the National Curriculum as the basis for planning schemes of work for the children in their classes. (Programmes of study set out the minimum statutory entitlement of what students should be taught in each subject and in each *key stage*.) To assist teachers, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) produces optional schemes of work for primary teachers for the teaching of science, information and communication technology, design and technology, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education (PE), and religious education (RE). The QCA has also produced a scheme of work for those primary schools teaching a modern foreign language at *key stage 2* and for (non-statutory) citizenship education at *key stages 1* and *2*. The schemes of work are available online: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes/>.

In addition, a website, launched in autumn 2002, provides guidance and ideas for teachers to support their planning and teaching of swimming activities and water safety as part of the PE national curriculum. This site is accessible at <http://www.nc.uk.net/safeswimming/>.

### Other resources

All schools have computers available for use by students. Teachers may also use audio-visual equipment such as television, videos, slides, radio and audio recordings. The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) is the focus for expertise in the use of technology in learning (<http://www.becta.org.uk>). In addition, the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative (<http://www.ngfl.gov.uk>) aims to provide a wealth of on-line teaching and learning materials.

Information on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been provided above.

***How far, and in which subjects, are resources statutory/ recommended/ subsidised? (eg textbooks, courses, lesson plans for teachers, web-based materials)***

### Textbooks

Textbooks are not approved by the State and there are no prescribed texts at primary level. Textbooks are produced by commercial publishers and teachers are responsible for determining teaching methods and materials. Teaching methods and learning materials are therefore usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the headteacher and subject coordinators (classroom teachers, who, in addition, have responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school).

Although compulsory booklists do not exist, in accordance with the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study for English, students in *key stages* 1 and 2 study a range of specified types of texts, including literature texts - traditional and modern fiction, stories from different cultures, plays, poems etc - and non-fiction and non-literary texts. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) provides advisory lists of recommended authors for teachers.

Publicly-funded (maintained) schools provide textbooks for primary students and may not charge for books or stationery.

Nationally available schemes of work and the teaching frameworks for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (see above) are not statutory.