

The Parent's guide to understanding your child's new curriculum



Just when you think you've finally got your head around the curriculum, they bring in new changes...

This guide is here to show you what's planned in 2015 and how it's going to affect your child, in simple and practical terms.

This year the Department of Education and Ofqual have announced new changes to the structure and content of the curriculum for 5-11 year olds, Secondary school pupils to the age of 14 and GCSE students in English schools.

These new changes come into play in September 2015, with the first set of exams affected in the summer of 2017.

As a proactive local tuition centre, we've been working to make sure our services are going to be tailored towards the new curriculum. Recently we've been in contact with so many parents who are desperate to get some proper advice that doesn't contain lots of jargon, tells them what they need to know and explains how they can help.

That's why we've created this guide - to tell you exactly what these new changes are, what they mean to your child and how you can help them in the best way possible. What schools, parents and tuition centres like ourselves all want is for your child to get the right support to succeed.

So read on, find out more about the new curriculum changes and see how you can help your child make the most of the new structure.

How is the Curriculum Structured Now?

The National Curriculum is split into 5 different Key Stages depending on the age of your child...

Key Stage 1 - Ages 5 - 7 (Years 1 - 2)

Key Stage 2 - Ages 7 - 11 (Years 3 - 6)

Key Stage 3 - Ages 11 - 14 (Years 7 - 9)

Key Stage 4 - Ages 14 - 16 (Years 10 - 11)

Key Stage 5 - Ages 16 - 19 (Years 12 - 13)

The main purpose of the curriculum is to ensure consistency and equality across the board, to give all students the best standards of education.

There are specific 'core' subjects that will be compulsory at various points of your child's school career and for each of these subjects, at each Key Stage, there will be a program of study set out detailing exactly what pupils should be taught.

Schools will then organise their individual curriculum around these markers.

The 'Core Subjects'

Maths
English
Science
Physical Education

Other 'Non- Core' Subjects

Art and Design
Citizenship
Geography
History
ICT
Modern Foreign Languages
Music

As part of the changes in the curriculum, these Key Stages and subjects will not be changing. What will be changing is the content of some of the subjects, and what examiners will be looking for.

So what's changing?

New Content Changes

In short, the aim of the new curriculum is to slim-line the content of the subjects, (aside from primary English, Maths and Science) to concentrate more on essential knowledge. It's hoped that this outlook will allow teachers a bit more freedom to shape their lesson plans towards the individual students in their classes.

Changes in Key Stages 1, 2, and 3

The main content of subjects will still be studied, however, there are some additions and changes to the way certain subjects will be approached.

- **Maths:** Overall children will be expected to learn and know more at an earlier age, for example, by 9 years old, pupils will be expected to know their 12 times table.
- **English:** There will be more emphasis on the works of Shakespeare and spelling will become more of a vital skill to have.
- **Science:** Hard facts and scientific knowledge will become more important in the new curriculum, rather than philosophical questions.
- **ICT:** Due to the expansion of technology, and the part it has to play in today's society, pupils will learn to write code as well as learning how to use computer software.
- **History:** Rather than splitting up content thematically, students will look at history with a more chronological eye.

So what's changing?

Changes in Key Stage 4 (GCSE)

At GCSE level and above, there are some more marked changes to the content of the new curriculum.

- **Maths:** Emphasis will now be placed on larger, more complex, multi-step equations. Ratios and proportion will play a bigger part, as will learning key formulae by heart. It's hoped that this will ensure pupils are prepared for real-world problems. Some content from the A-Level syllabus will also be introduced at GCSE Level.
- **English Language:** While there will be no set texts, pupils will be expected to read widely. Grammar spelling and punctuation will be more keenly assessed.
- **English Literature:** There will be a focus on key areas of classic literature including Shakespeare, 19th Century novels, poetry post 1850 and British fiction post the First World War. Students will also be encouraged to read for pleasure.
- **Sciences:** The sciences taught as part of the new curriculum will link and apply to mathematics, with students expected to recall formulae.

New Assessments

The Grading System

Here is where you may see the biggest, or most obvious changes to the curriculum.

Traditional A* - G grades are being replaced, in their place will be a different scale, with grade 9 as the highest and 1 as the lowest grades available.

Here's how traditional grading compares to the new numerical scale:

NEW GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE									
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	U
A*		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
CURRENT GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE									

According to the new grading structure, broadly the same proportion of students will achieve grade 4 and above, as current students who achieve grade C and above. By the same standard, there will be around the same amount of students achieving a 7 or above as there are currently reaching an A or above. The Department for Education has also decided that grade 5 will be a 'good pass'.

The Examination System

For GCSEs in particular, the new curriculum aims to examine students by end of year, timed examination only rather than using course-work. Courses will also be designed for two years of study – they will no longer be divided into different modules and students will take all their exams in one period at the end of their course.

Re-sits is where we'll see another change, as opportunities to re-enter exams will only be available each November in English Language and Maths only. This has caused some worry among parents, as it means there will be less opportunities for students to improve their grades, should they not get the result they hoped for first time around.

It simply means that we'll need to make sure students are even more prepared when it comes to entering their examinations at the end of the school year. And this is one of many areas that the team at Kip McGrath Brentwood can help with.



What can YOU do?

What can you do to help your child get the best out of these new changes?

While there may be many changes introduced this year, there are still key things that you as a parent can do to make sure your child is getting the support they need. And luckily, you've already done one thing- reading this guide to find out more!

What can YOU do?

- ✓ **Keep in contact with your child's teacher regularly.** Besides the odd parents' evening, there's probably not too much interaction between you and your child's teachers at school. Keeping in contact with them and getting regular updates can really help to keep your child on track, and their teacher will most likely be only too happy to help.
- ✓ **Get an outline of the curriculum in your school.** If your child's teacher can give you a basic outline of what they are going to cover over the school year in each subject, you'll be better placed to give support to your child.
- ✓ **Make sure your child gets their homework done.** Let your child know that you think education is important and that homework needs to be done each day. You can help your child with homework by setting aside a special place to study, establishing a regular time for homework, and removing distractions.
- ✓ **Encourage your child to read.** Ensuring your child reads a variety of texts is the single most important thing that you can do to help the child to succeed in school-and in life, plus it's even more necessary than ever in the new curriculum.
- ✓ **Get some extra support.** As a parent you want the best for your child, but that doesn't make you an expert on every single subject. Even if you are able to help your child and review their lessons with them in depth, you may not always have the time to do so.