

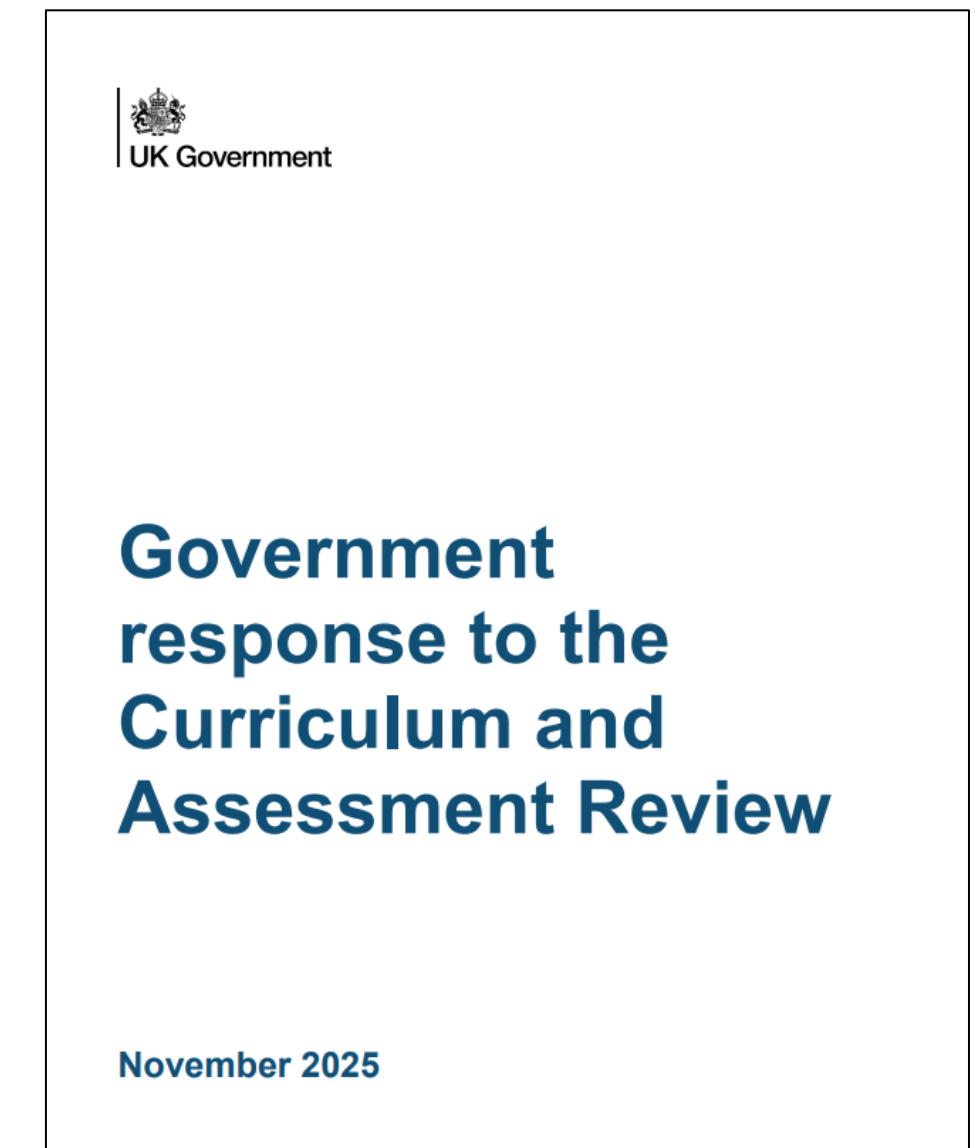
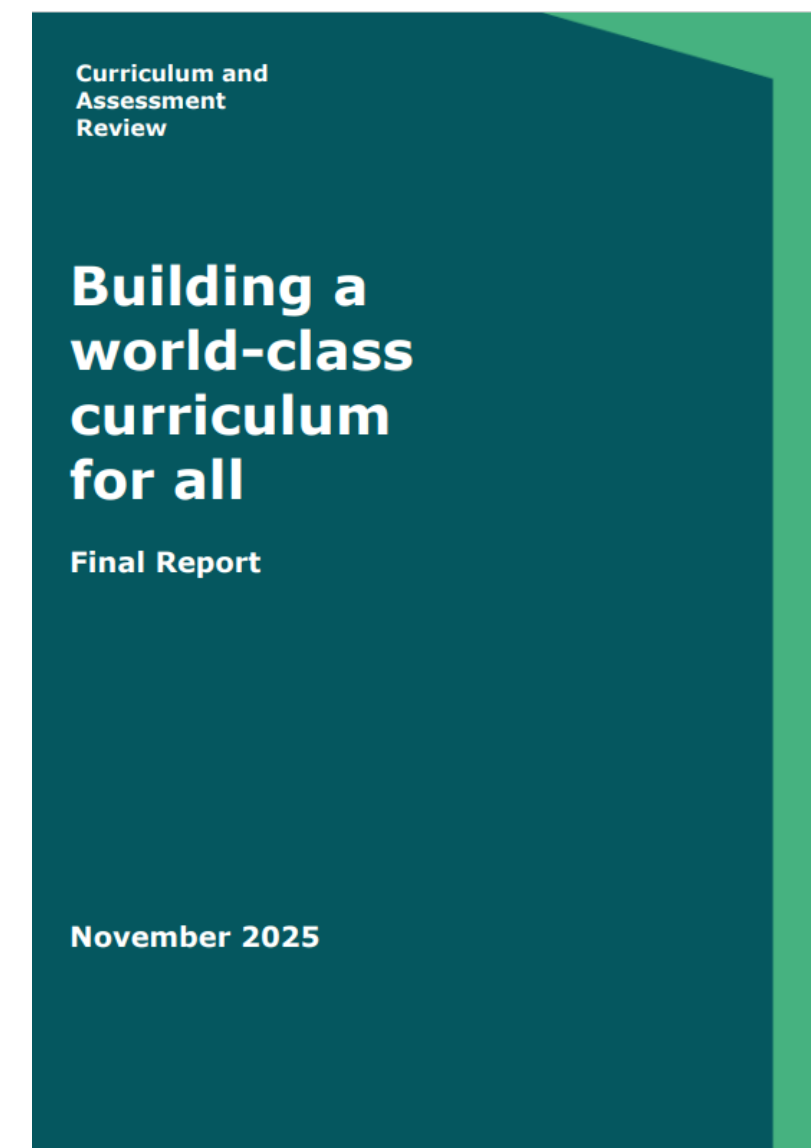
Children's
Services

Curriculum and Assessment Review

Building a world-class curriculum for all

Background

- In July 2024, Government invited Professor Becky Francis to lead independent review of national curriculum and statutory assessment system in England.
- Review looked across Key Stages 1 - 4 (KS1 - 4) and 16-19 education, at challenges to attainment, and barriers to opportunities and life chances – in particular, those who are socio-economically disadvantaged and/or have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- Final report¹ sets out conclusions and recommendations for Government.
- Government has also published its response², which set out next steps and plans for implementation.



1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-and-assessment-review-final-report>;

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-and-assessment-review-final-report-government-response>

Principles

- **Evidence and Data Informed:** decisions based on solid evidence
- **Evolution, Not Revolution:** building on existing strengths and successes
- **Aware of Trade-offs:** considering practical implementation and workload
- **Focused on Key Issues:** without destabilising the system
- **High-Quality Curriculum:** a comprehensive curriculum for all
- **Removing Barriers:** access to quality education and pathways for all

What's working well and should be maintained?

Many aspects of the current system are working well:

- The current knowledge-rich national curriculum has had a positive impact on attainment.
- The present architecture of key stages is generally working well and we recommend retaining it.
- Our national assessments and qualifications are, broadly, working well.

But other areas are in need of change.

Recommendations: Five key themes

1. High standards must mean high standards for all
2. Curriculum shape and individual subjects
3. Knowledge and skills for the future
4. Revitalising post-16
5. Assessment and accountability

In addition, there will be an **enrichment entitlement** for all.

1. High standards must mean high standards for all

A world-leading education system must deliver excellence for all young people, irrespective of background. The current system is working well in many respects, but it is not delivering high standards for all.

Aim to remove barriers to access in all subject areas and assessments:

- Measures to ensure all have the requisite KS3 competencies for success in English and Maths and GCSE
- An entitlement to Triple Science at GCSE
- Asking Government to optimise its investment to ensure all have the opportunity to learn to read music and play an instrument
- Provision of resources to exemplify best practice in curriculum inclusion and adaptation for children with additional needs

Reference: <https://educationscape.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Slides-Under-the-CAR-Bonnet-webinar-07.11.25.pdf>

2. Curriculum shape and individual subjects

Recommendations for improvements and updates in every National Curriculum subject area having applied a set of curriculum principles.

- Our principles set out the features a refreshed world class curriculum must have.
- All young people will be able to see themselves in the curriculum, whilst broadening their horizons.
- Teachers have enough flexibility to challenge high attainers and make sure those who are struggling can master core concepts.
- The national curriculum must be an aspirational entitlement for all, but must not exceed its intended limits: space must be provided for the broader school curriculum.

3. Knowledge & skills for the future

Curriculum must equip young people for a world that is changing quickly, with more attention to certain applied knowledge and skills.

- Strengthen **financial education** in Citizenship, exemplified in Maths.
- Improve **digital literacy**, including awareness of online safety.
- Strengthen **media literacy** to support protection against misinformation.
- Bolster the presence of **climate education and sustainability** in Science and Geography.
- Support **oracy**, including introduction of an oracy framework.
- Strengthen **Citizenship**, recommending it should be mandatory at primary, and reviewed to improve its efficacy, clarity and progression.

4. Revitalising post-16

To provide a clearer set of pathways for 16-19 education.

- Introduction of **V Levels** as a high quality, coherent and well-recognised vocational, applied alternative to that provided by three A Levels or a T Level.
- Introduce two pathways at level 2: One for learners looking to progress to a level 2 occupation and another to support learners to progress to level 3.
- Introduction of a new level 1 stepped qualification to improve success rates for English and Maths at post-16.

5. Assessment and accountability

A number of areas to improve national assessments, qualifications and accountability:

- Removal of EBacc accountability measures, whilst retaining Progress 8, without change.
- Reducing time students spend sitting GCSE exams by at least 10%.
- Replace the current Grammar, Punctuating and Spelling (GPS) test at KS2 with an amended test, to better assess **application**.
- Introduce Year 8 diagnostic checks in English and maths, to enable teachers to identify and address weaknesses before students progress to KS4.

Enrichment entitlement

- Evidence shows that increased participation in extra-curricular activities **is associated with higher academic outcomes.**
- Government also setting out a **new core enrichment entitlement**, so that every child – wherever they go to school – has access to activities across five categories of enrichment:
 - *civic engagement;*
 - *arts and culture;*
 - *nature, outdoor and adventure;*
 - *sport and physical activities;*
 - *developing wider life skills.*

Reference: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-curriculum-to-give-young-people-the-skills-for-life-and-work>

Other key reforms include:

- A new primary oracy framework, and a new combined secondary oracy, reading and writing framework so these are embedded across the whole curriculum.
- Exploring a new language qualification which banks progress and motivates pupils to want to continue studying, complementing existing GCSEs and A levels.

Government response to Key Secondary and Post 16 recommendations

English

Introduce a diagnostic test in English, to be taken in year 8

Not accepted – DfE says instead it will introduce a statutory reading test in Year 8 and expect all schools to assess pupil progress in writing and maths in Year 8 and will support them to select the right products to do this.

Changes to the key stage 4 English and the GCSE English language subject content, to focus English language more clearly on the nature and expression of language, and to support critical analysis of a wider variety of text types.

Accepted by DfE.

Review the genres specified in the English key stage 4 programme of study and GCSE English Literature subject content to ensure that students continue to study texts drawn from the recognised body of English literature and that they also benefit from studying texts drawn from the full breadth of our literary heritage, including more diverse and representative texts.

Accepted by DfE.

Government response to Key Secondary and Post 16 recommendations

Maths

Re-sequence content, refine SATs and year 8 'diagnostic' test.

Accepted by DfE.

Introduce a diagnostic test in maths, to be taken in year 8.

Not accepted – DfE says instead it will expect all schools to assess pupil progress in writing and maths in Year 8 and will support them to select the right products to do this.

Science

Introduce an entitlement to triple science at GCSE, so that any student who wants to study triple science has the opportunity to do so.

Accepted by DfE.

Computing

Replace GCSE computer science with a computing GCSE which reflects the full breadth of the computing curriculum.

Accepted by DfE.

Government response to Key Secondary and Post 16 recommendations

Geography

Reinforce fieldwork, embed climate change more explicitly.

Accepted by DfE.

History

Clarify what's statutory, review content and assessments.

Accepted by DfE.

Languages

Explore a coordinated local approach to the main language taught from KS2 through to KS4, taking account of their local context.

Accepted by DfE.

Government response to Key Secondary and Post 16 recommendations

Music

Optimise investment to support learning instruments.

Accepted by DfE.

Physical education (PE)

Redraft the purpose of study for PE, retaining the importance of competitive sports, but clarifying the significance of providing all pupils with opportunities to learn in a physical environment and emphasising its physical, social, cognitive and emotional benefits.

Accepted by DfE.

Religious education (RE)

Add RE to the national curriculum in due course, with a staged approach taken.

Accepted by DfE.

Implementation

- The new curriculum will be implemented in full, for first teaching from **September 2028**.
- Government will aim to **publish the final revised national curriculum by spring 2027** – giving schools **four terms** to prepare for the changes.