A condensed Key Stage 3: Designing a flexible curriculum
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**Acknowledgements**

We are very grateful to the schools participating in the two-year Key Stage 3 project, listed below, for providing case study material and other information about their approach to the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

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Introduction

Background

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning across the curriculum for all 11–14-year-olds. It is based on four important principles:

- expectations: establishing high expectations for all pupils and setting challenging targets for them to achieve;
- progression: strengthening the transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and ensuring progression in teaching and learning across Key Stage 3;
- engagement: promoting approaches to teaching and learning that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation;
- transformation: strengthening teaching and learning through a programme of professional development and practical support.

The 2001 Green Paper Schools: Building on Success proposed a two-year Key Stage 3 pilot and this was initiated in February 2003 as part of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. The aims of the project are to develop ways of completing programmes of study for Key Stage 3 in two years that will:

- increase the pace of learning and raise standards;
- enhance pupils’ motivation and engagement;
- improve transfer between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3;
- increase curriculum flexibility through the use of saved time in Key Stage 3 and throughout the 14–19 phase.

About this document

This guidance is intended to help schools to make effective use of the flexibility in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. It is based on early lessons learned from the two-year Key Stage 3 project. This is an ongoing project that is still being evaluated and consequently this guidance may be subject to further revisions. This guidance also builds on the earlier DfES and QCA joint publication Designing the
Key Stage 3 Curriculum\(^1\) which describes, with examples, how to design and timetable a Key Stage 3 curriculum that is relevant to an individual school's circumstances.

Section 1 of this document describes the flexibility available to schools under current legislation.

Sections 2 to 7 discuss how this flexibility can be used to design a more personalised Key Stage 3 curriculum. The issues in sections 2 to 6 are addressed in the order a school would be likely to consider them when thinking about planning a condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum:

- the reasons for condensing the key stage;
- which pupils, which subjects and which years should be involved;
- how the pace of learning could be improved;
- making the most of saved time;
- what practical issues need to be addressed;
- how the impact of the change to the curriculum may be monitored and evaluated.

The final section offers six case studies showing how particular schools have addressed each of these issues to plan a Key Stage 3 curriculum that reflects their particular circumstances.

The explorative nature of a condensed Key Stage 3

The two-year Key Stage 3 project is explorative. This guidance is based on early experiences of the project and describes the approaches that some of the schools involved in the project are adopting. The ideas contained in this guidance are therefore tentative. The impact of the project is being evaluated by Ofsted and NFER/LSE. Their final reports are not due to be submitted until autumn 2006. Consequently, lessons will still be learned from the project as the evaluation continues.

Pupils have only one opportunity to learn and achieve in Years 7, 8 and 9. This guidance repeatedly stresses that any school contemplating a two-year Key Stage 3 should be confident that participating pupils would achieve at least the same level of success in the condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum as they would have in three years. Equally, it is important for the school to have systems in place that will enable pupils following a condensed programme in Years 7 and 8 to revert to a three-year programme if their learning is not on target to meet at least national expectations by the end of Year 8.

\(^1\) Copies can be ordered through DfES Publications, reference DfES 0003/2002, or downloaded from www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/respub
1 Making the most of flexibility in Key Stage 3

What the law requires on the curriculum

All maintained schools are required to provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and in society;
- prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Each school has to teach the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 3, schools must teach the programmes of study of the following National Curriculum subjects:

- English
- geography
- mathematics
- modern foreign languages
- science
- art and design
- design and technology
- music
- ICT
- physical education
- history
- citizenship

Other statutory requirements are to teach:

- religious education;
- sex and relationship education;
- careers education.

There are no nationally specified programmes of study for these three additional requirements, but schools, other than voluntary-aided or schools with a religious character, must teach religious education according to the locally agreed syllabus. Sex and relationship education should be delivered through the non-statutory framework for personal, social and health education (PHSE). Schools are also expected to use the framework for PHSE and the statutory requirements within the National Curriculum science order to deliver drug education.
The revised statutory requirements at Key Stage 4

Completing the Key Stage 3 programmes of study in less than three years can create new curriculum opportunities in both Key Stage 3 and the 14–19 phase. Schools that want to make the most of these opportunities will also need to take into account the revised statutory requirements for Key Stage 4.

From September 2004, the statutory Key Stage 4 curriculum consists of:

- a small core of compulsory subjects: English, ICT, mathematics, science, citizenship, physical education and religious education;
- compulsory areas of learning: careers education, sex and relationship education, and work-related learning;
- entitlement areas: the arts, design and technology, the humanities, and modern foreign languages. In all four entitlement areas, schools must make available a course leading to an approved qualification. Such courses must be available to all pupils who wish to study them.

The flexibility for schools

DES Circular 7/90 recommended a teaching week of at least 24 hours at Key Stage 3. There are no constraints on the way that the National Curriculum subjects can be distributed or timetabled across the key stage. The only requirement is that the programme of study for each subject is completed by the end of the key stage.

There are no nationally prescribed time allocations for any subject. However, the DfE Circular 1/94 Religious education and collective worship makes a recommendation that religious education is taught for 45 hours per year in Key Stage 3. Most locally agreed syllabuses are based on this time allocation.

In addition, when timetabling physical education, schools should take account of the joint DfES and DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) Public Service Agreement, which:
seeks to enhance sporting activities for 5–16 year olds by increasing the percentage of school children in England who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high-quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum to 75% in 2006.

Learning Through PE and Sport, DfES/DCMS 2003

Schools enjoy considerable flexibility in designing, organising and timetabling the curriculum, and in the choice of the year in which pupils take the National Curriculum end-of-key stage tests. A school can decide:

- which subjects to prioritise;
- whether to include additional subjects and skills;
- how the curriculum is organised and distributed across the key stage;
- the time allocated to teach each subject;
- the number of teaching hours in the week;
- the length of lessons;
- the number of days in the timetable cycle;
- in collaboration with the local education authority (LEA), the number of terms in the school year;
- how the needs of different types of pupil will be met;
- the ways of grouping pupils.

For suggested starting points in deciding the teaching time to be allocated to each subject, see the two-year Key Stage 3 supplementary curriculum guidance documents for English, mathematics, science, ICT, and foundation subjects and RE; see also Appendix 1: A basis for deciding time allocations, in Designing the Key Stage 3 curriculum. See the Appendix (page 62) for details of these publications.

A condensed Key Stage 3

A school does not have to disapply the National Curriculum in order to teach a condensed Key Stage 3. Disapplication – not applying the National Curriculum requirements to a pupil or a group of pupils – at Key Stage 3 is intended for exceptional circumstances, such as temporarily for a pupil who has been ill or away from school for a lengthy period; for a pupil who is newly arrived in the UK and does not speak English; for pupils with special educational needs; or by way of curriculum experiment.

Key Stage 3 is legally defined as ‘the period beginning at the same time as the school year in which the majority of pupils in the class attain the age of twelve and ending at the same time as the school year in which the majority of pupils in the class attain the age of fourteen’, commonly described as Years 7, 8 and 9. The key stage itself cannot be condensed. Strictly speaking, a condensed Key Stage 3 means completing a National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 3 in less than three years. ‘Completing’ should be interpreted as teaching all the requirements as specified in the programmes of study.
When designing a condensed Key Stage 3, a school needs to decide:

- which pupils will benefit: whether an individual pupil, a group of pupils, or the whole cohort. This decision may be based on the needs and abilities of the pupils, or their motivation and engagement, or other criteria;
- which subjects: whether the curriculum will be compressed for one subject, several subjects, or all subjects;
- which blocks of time the Key Stage 3 programmes will be taught in: this might be in particular years, for example Years 7 and 8 or Years 8 and 9, or specific terms, or even in specified weeks or days of the week.

If a school intends to complete the Key Stage 3 curriculum in less than three years, it must by law still teach religious education, drug education, sex and relationship education, and careers education to all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. A school deciding to condense its Key Stage 3 curriculum for religious education may wish to seek advice from its local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Similarly, a voluntary-aided school with a religious determination would want to discuss its proposals with the appropriate authority.

If a second foreign language is currently taught in Key Stage 3, it is important to consider the implications of condensing the time allocated to covering the curriculum on that second language. A decision not to offer a second language in Key Stage 3 might reduce curriculum breadth and the range of choices available to pupils at Key Stage 4. Equally, schools could consider using the time that would have been available for the second language to concentrate on the first language.
If schools are intending to cover the National Curriculum programme of study for physical education in two years, they are still required to provide physical education and school sport in the third year of the key stage. While some of those activities might be outside the normal school timetable, schools should ensure that all pupils take part in high-quality PE and school sport.

Pupils can begin working on a National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 4 if their headteacher judges that they have completed the Key Stage 3 programme of study and are ready to proceed to the Key Stage 4 programme of study. GCSEs and other external qualifications can be taken at any age.

Where a school is planning for some pupils to complete a Key Stage 3 programme of study by the end of Year 8, it will need to decide when those pupils should be entered for their statutory assessment.

**What the law requires on assessment and reporting**

A pupil may take the end-of-Key Stage 3 statutory assessments (the National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments) in any subject, at the end of any year during the key stage, as long as the headteacher judges that the pupil has completed the Key Stage 3 programme of study.

A pupil may only take the statutory Key Stage 3 assessments, in any subject, once. If they are taken in Year 7 or 8, they cannot be taken again in Year 8 or 9. A pupil who has been entered earlier than his or her peers cannot be re-entered the following year or any subsequent year.

If pupils take the tests at the end of Year 7 or 8, they do not receive any special treatment. They sit exactly the same test, under the same conditions, as all the other pupils taking the test that year and it is marked in exactly the same way. See page 35 for further guidance on entering pupils for tests early.

The results of the statutory assessments are currently reported in the year that the assessment is taken and contribute to that year’s performance tables. Reporting arrangements are unaffected by the choice of year in which the assessment is taken. A school reports to parents on an annual basis and reports National Curriculum assessment results in the year in which they are taken.
2 Why: the rationale

How condensing the key stage might make learning more efficient and effective

Condensing Key Stage 3 may generate improvements in the following four key areas.

1. The transfer from Key Stage 2 may be improved. If there is less time to complete the programme of study, pupils cannot afford to make a slow start or repeat material they have already learned in primary school. A school needs to work with its feeder schools to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the transfer and that teachers have the information they need to build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. For example, some schools may agree to work together on bridging units or start on Key Stage 3 programmes of study in Year 6 after the National Curriculum tests.

2. The organisation of the curriculum may be improved. A school might, for example, decide that the timetabling arrangements for Key Stage 3 should be a higher priority than in the past. It may decide to organise the curriculum along primary lines in Year 7 with one teacher teaching most subjects to the class.

3. Teaching and learning may be improved as teachers have to review their schemes of work and their pedagogical approaches. They will have to reconsider the content and order of teaching units and decide how to cover them in a shorter length of time. Pupils may find the work more challenging because they are taught at a quicker pace with less repetition. They will need to be taught in ways that stimulate them and capture their interest. Teachers will therefore have to reconsider their teaching and learning strategies and find new ways of engaging and motivating their pupils.

4. The opportunity to provide a broader and more flexible curriculum may arise because less than three years are being used to teach the Key Stage 3 programmes of study. For example, new or extended areas of study and enrichment activities could be introduced in the released time. These new elements could produce a curriculum that is better suited to pupils’ needs and interests. For example, a school might provide an early start to Key Stage 4 courses or increase the opportunities for work-related experiences in Year 9.
However, it should not be assumed that a condensed Key Stage 3 is concerned solely with acceleration. Increased curriculum flexibility can mean much more than an early start to GCSEs. The saved time, which may not necessarily be Year 9, could be used for:

- offering a wider range of Key Stage 4 courses. For example, pupils could have the opportunity to learn an additional modern foreign language, or to choose between double, triple or applied science GCSEs;

- providing courses in curriculum areas that are outside the National Curriculum, such as astronomy, or philosophy, or film studies;

- consolidating basic skills of lower-attaining pupils in Year 7, including study skills, problem-solving skills, and personal and social skills prior to embarking on the Key Stage 3 programmes of study. This may help these pupils achieve higher standards by the end of Year 9;

- providing short taster courses and improving careers education in Year 9 to help pupils to make better informed decisions about the curriculum pathways they want to follow in 14–19 education;

- providing opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to their personal and social development, their health and well-being;

- providing intensive courses or experiences in a particular curriculum area. For example, a school may use the saved time for extended exchange visits to a partner school to improve pupils’ learning of a modern foreign language;

- increasing the opportunities for work-related study, including vocational placements and work experience, and applying skills learned in school within a workplace setting;

- developing a range of subject-related enrichment activities. For example, in science this may include environmental fieldwork, ecology and integrated curriculum projects. In English this may include a greater range of theatre visits or workshops in school. In music this could involve increasing opportunities for specialising in chosen areas of musical interest or aptitude;

- extending the opportunities for out-of-school activities, including voluntary and community work or Duke of Edinburgh’s Award projects.

Improvements in the four areas above could increase pupils’ motivation and engagement and result in higher standards of attainment.
A condensed Key Stage 3 presents a school with a challenge to rethink the way it delivers National Curriculum learning at Key Stage 3.

An individual school will have its own particular reasons for considering a condensed Key Stage 3. For example, one school’s main motive for introducing it may be to increase the pace of learning for its core group of pupils in order to raise standards. In another school, where standards may already be high, the school may implement a condensed Key Stage 3 to increase curriculum flexibility and provide a broader curriculum from Year 9 onwards.

**EXAMPLES**

- A middle-deemed secondary school and its receiving upper school are implementing a two-year Key Stage 3 because they believe that the transfer from Key Stage 2 is already effective, but that some pupils lose momentum between Years 8 and 9. The middle school is planning to make an early start on the Key Stage 3 programmes of study after the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests. This will enable the upper school to provide a more targeted, flexible Key Stage 4 curriculum, including the opportunity for higher-attaining pupils to begin Key Stage 4 courses early.

- One school provides an effective teaching programme in Key Stage 3 and achieves good results. However, it believes that its pupils could make much faster progress in the early stages of Year 7 if the transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 could be improved. It is adopting a two-year Key Stage 3 as a means of stimulating these improvements.

- A school found that its lower-attaining pupils did not have the necessary basic skills to begin learning a modern foreign language at the beginning of Year 7 and decided to delay the introduction of a foreign language for these pupils until the summer term of Year 7. This allows a greater emphasis on teaching these basic skills in the first two terms. The modern foreign language programme of study will then be covered in seven terms rather than the usual nine, but the pupils will be better able to access the programme of study and the school hopes that they will be more motivated and achieve higher standards by the end of Year 9.

- For another school the focus of a condensed Key Stage 3 is on improving teaching and learning. It has rewritten its schemes of work, channelled extra funding into the increased use of classroom assistants and is making better use of e-learning and homework opportunities. The school wants all its pupils always to be taught in a stimulating and challenging way and believes that a condensed Key Stage 3 will help to facilitate this.
A school with a large number of low-attaining pupils wants to use Year 7 to develop pupils’ problem-solving skills and consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills before they embark on the Key Stage 3 programmes of study. It is confident that a year spent in a different style of learning will help pupils to make better progress in the Key Stage 3 programmes of study in Years 8 and 9 and attain higher standards by the end of Year 9.

Another school sees a two-year Key Stage 3 as a means to rethink the organisation of the curriculum. Year 7 becomes the timetabling priority. The timetable is now drawn up on the principle that there will be no split classes in Year 7 and the most innovative and creative teachers will be deployed in Key Stage 3.
A school considering a condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum has to decide three fundamental issues:

- which pupils will be included;
- which subjects will be involved;
- in which blocks of time the Key Stage 3 programmes of study will be taught.

**Which pupils and subjects?**

When deciding to condense Key Stage 3, a school will want to be confident that pupils will attain at least the expected standard, which is level 5/6, by the end of the key stage. They should also aim for the attainment of pupils to be at least as high at the end of the condensed key stage as would be expected over a three-year key stage. In planning a condensed Key Stage 3, it is therefore crucial to include only those pupils and those subjects where the school has good evidence to suggest that these levels of attainment can be achieved. If there are subjects or pupils that are unlikely to reach the expected standard, they should not be included.

There are four possible models for a condensed Key Stage 3 as far as pupils and subjects are concerned:

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<td>SOME pupils</td>
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The particular model adopted should reflect a school’s reasons for implementing a condensed Key Stage 3. A middle-deemed secondary school, after liaising with its partner high school, might decide on a two-year Key Stage 3 for most pupils and all subjects in Years 7 and 8 because the end of the key stage would then occur in the final year of the middle school, avoiding the dip in performance which can occur when pupils move to a new school at the beginning of Year 9.
A school may decide to involve initially only those departments that feel most confident in adopting a condensed Key Stage 3. If a school's objective is to improve the transfer from Key Stage 2, then a two-year Key Stage 3 might include all pupils, but only in those subjects where improved transfer arrangements and a prompt start on the Key Stage 3 programmes of study can be achieved. If a school's main objective were to allow higher-attaining pupils to begin some GCSEs a year early, then clearly only these pupils would follow a two-year Key Stage 3.

Some schools may design a condensed key stage for several reasons, and their Key Stage 3 provision will look very different for different groups of pupils.

**EXAMPLES**

- One school's principal aim in adopting a condensed Key Stage 3 in some subjects is to improve transfer from some of its partner primary schools. Year 6 pupils begin a series of projects designed jointly by the secondary school and the feeder schools. Secondary teachers visit the feeder schools towards the end of Year 6 to work with the pupils and their teachers. The projects, which are completed in the autumn term at the secondary school, serve as the focus for curriculum targets during the first half-term of Year 7. Since the projects are based on the core subjects, the condensed Key Stage 3 comprises the core subjects and includes pupils from the partner schools that are part of the initiative.

- One school has planned to use Year 7 to develop pupils' problem-solving skills and strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills before they embark on Key Stage 3 in Year 8. It has structured Year 7 as a series of cross-curricular projects. The projects focus on aspects of pupils' everyday lives, such as chart music, fashion and computer games, and present them with problem-solving challenges that involve the practical application of literacy and numeracy skills. The aim is that a radically different style of learning in Year 7 will help pupils to reconsider their ideas about school and about their ability to do well at school. The two-year Key Stage 3 therefore involves all pupils and all subjects.

- Another school sees a two-year Key Stage 3 as a means of reinvigorating all aspects of its approach to Key Stage 3: transfer, the organisation of the curriculum, and teaching and learning. However, it recognises the significant challenge this represents to its staff, and the importance of ensuring that pupils attain in two years at least what was expected in three. The first year of the school's implementation of a two-year Key Stage 3 therefore involves only two of its strongest and most forward-thinking departments. Acting as models for the other departments gives them an extra incentive to make a success of the initiative, and their experiences will pave the way for other departments to follow them in the future.
Which blocks of time?

While a condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum might be taught in only two years, the possibilities for a condensed Key Stage 3 go well beyond the two-year model.

For example, a school might decide to delay the start of the Key Stage 3 programmes of study for just a term in order help pupils transferring from primary school to adjust to their new school and to new ways of teaching and learning. The term might be spent in a series of projects that are more cross-curricular and cover topics that are outside the National Curriculum programmes of study. This would act as a bridge between the primary school classroom and the subject-based teaching of the secondary school. Teachers could plan learning activities without having to ensure that the subject matter fell within the Key Stage 3 programme of study. This would result in an eight-term Key Stage 3.

Another possibility is that a school might want to free itself from the requirements of the Key Stage 3 programmes of study for one day every week, or two weeks every term, or a term every year in order to create a different approach to learning. The non-Key Stage 3 programme of study time might, for example, be devoted to thematic projects to help motivate pupils and give them the opportunity to apply their knowledge in practical contexts. In these blocks of time, teachers could plan learning activities without feeling constrained by National Curriculum programmes of study.

A two-year Key Stage 3 could comprise Years 7 and 8, or Years 8 and 9, or Years 7 and 9. The defining feature of a two-year Key Stage 3 is that a programme of study is covered across two school years rather than three.
Schools might regard Years 7 and 8 as an obvious model to consider because it is easy to understand how it would operate. It builds on pupils’ recent experiences in Year 6 and there is the potential to use Year 9 more creatively. This reflects the pattern currently followed in some schools where some Year 9 pupils start some Key Stage 4 courses early. However, this is not necessarily the most appropriate model for every pupil in every school. For example, opportunities that broaden and enrich the curriculum or seek to make it more relevant to particular groups of pupils could be offered in Year 7 before pupils embark on the Key Stage 3 programmes of study. Indeed, if pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding are reinforced through alternative learning activities in Year 7 they may achieve higher standards at the end of Year 9 and be better prepared for their Key Stage 4 courses. One project school chose to teach some modules from their science GCSE course in Year 8 and then complete the Key Stage 3 programme of study in Year 9. (See case study 3, page 49.) This is a very radical approach, reflecting the explorative and innovative nature of the two-year Key Stage 3 project. In this situation it is essential to ensure that progression and continuity are not compromised by the departure from sequential learning in consecutive years in Key Stage 3.

It is therefore important to consider carefully which two years should comprise a two-year Key Stage 3. All the subjects that are following a two-year Key Stage 3 curriculum do not necessarily have to cover the National Curriculum programmes of study in the same two years. For example, the Key Stage 3 curriculum could be taught in some subjects in Years 7 and 8, while in other subjects it is taught in Years 8 and 9.

### EXAMPLE

#### Coverage of Key Stage 3 programmes of study

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<td>Y7–8</td>
<td>Y7–9 (Y7–8)</td>
<td>Y7–8 (Y7–9)</td>
<td>Y7–8</td>
<td>Y8–9</td>
<td>Y7–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average-attaining pupils</td>
<td>Y7–8 (Y7–9)</td>
<td>Y7–8 (Y7–9)</td>
<td>Y7–9</td>
<td>Y7–8 (Y7–9)</td>
<td>Y7–8 (Y7–9)</td>
<td>Y8–9</td>
<td>Y7–9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-attaining pupils</td>
<td>Y8–9</td>
<td>Y8–9</td>
<td>Y7–9</td>
<td>Y7–9 (Y8–9)</td>
<td>Y7–8 (Y7–9)</td>
<td>Y8–9</td>
<td>Y7–9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages within each model of a two-year Key Stage 3.
### A two-year Key Stage 3: Model 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRONT-LOADED two-year KS3</strong></td>
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</table>

**ADVANTAGES**
- There is uninterrupted progression from KS2 to KS3, and potentially from KS3 to KS4 if the saved Y9 is used to begin KS4 study.
- This model maximises flexibility in the saved year - Y9. It can be used for an early start on KS4, or to enrich the curriculum, or to go beyond the programmes of study in a National Curriculum subject.

**DISADVANTAGES**
- There is no opportunity to improve the attainment of low-attaining pupils before they embark on KS3 programmes of study. These pupils may not be able to complete the programmes of study by the end of Y8.
- Pupils may be forced to make option choices at the end of Y8 that may narrow the curriculum for them. The 14–19 curriculum may become restrictive corridors rather than flexible pathways for some pupils.

### A two-year Key Stage 3: Model 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>END-LOADED two-year KS3</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ADVANTAGES**
- There is less risk of a Y8 dip in learning because Y8 is the start of a new activity: the KS3 programme of study.
- It is possible to support lower-attaining pupils by providing a targeted curriculum in Y7 to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy and to increase their confidence and motivation.
- There is uninterrupted progression from KS3 to KS4.

**DISADVANTAGES**
- Pupils’ progress during Y7 may be reduced.
- Progression from the end of KS2 through to the beginning of KS3 may be slower.
- Average- and higher-attaining pupils may not be sufficiently challenged.
- There is less curriculum flexibility in the saved year. Y7 can only be used for enrichment or consolidation.
### A two-year Key Stage 3: Model 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPLIT two-year KS3</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### ADVANTAGES
- There is uninterrupted progression from KS2 to KS3, and from KS3 to KS4.
- There is considerable flexibility in the saved year. It may be possible to use Year 8 for some KS4 work as well as alternative enrichment activities. Either way, Year 8 is different, helping to avoid a dip in learning.

#### DISADVANTAGES
- The break in KS3 learning may unsettle or confuse pupils. There may be a lack of continuity in particular subjects. Splitting the key stage successfully may require significant skills and creativity on the part of teachers.
- Similarly, starting on 14–19 studies (such as GCSE) in Year 8 and then continuing them in Year 10 after a year's break may be difficult to achieve successfully.

### EXAMPLE

One school adopted a two-year Key Stage 3 in Years 7 and 8 because it wanted to address the disaffection of pupils in Year 11. Previously, many Year 11 pupils became disengaged and consequently were not achieving their potential. By being able to start some GCSEs early and complete them by the end of Year 10, the school felt that pupils would feel under less pressure in Year 11. Pupils in Year 11 now have new opportunities to undertake local community work which will contribute to a GCSE in citizenship, Duke of Edinburgh's Award projects, the Sports Leadership Award and ASDAN. Enrichment options include calligraphy, archaeology and photography. The school hopes that by improving pupils’ experience of school in Year 11, attainment will rise and the retention rate into the sixth form will be improved.
How: increasing the pace of learning

When planning a condensed Key Stage 3, schools need to ensure that the transfer from Key Stage 2, the departmental schemes of work, the organisation of the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning are as effective as possible.

Improving transfer

An effective transfer from Key Stage 2 will enable a prompt and purposeful start to Key Stage 3. The following are ways of ensuring that the transfer process is as smooth as possible.

- The Common Transfer File should be used, as specified in the statutory requirements, to transmit key information about each pupil to the Key Stage 3 school. Schools can work together to decide when this information should be provided in order for it to be most effective, but it is vital that the Key Stage 3 school receives the File before the end of the final term in Year 6 so that it has time to make use of the information before the pupils arrive in September.

- Schools need to make full use of the information in the File, to group pupils, to target support and to plan an appropriately challenging Key Stage 3 curriculum. Efficient use of this data can help to reduce testing at the start of Key Stage 3.

- Schools can agree what extra information, beyond the statutory requirements, should be included in the File. The extra information might concern individual pupils’ motivation and whether or not they are achieving their potential. It might involve the sublevels achieved in the statutory assessments and details of achievements in the foundation subjects. It might include curricular targets for pupils. For example, Year 6 teachers could meet Year 7 teachers towards the end of the summer term to discuss what curricular targets might be appropriate for pupils. Ideally, they would also meet again in Year 7 to review the targets in the light of the pupils’ progress.

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2 See Key Stage 2: Assessment and Reporting Arrangements, published annually by QCA, and The Common Transfer File, DfES 0268/2002
Schools can often organise preliminary visits by groups of pupils to their new school for orientation and taster lessons. Particularly where there are large numbers of feeder schools, it might be possible to create a website-based virtual induction as well.

Year 7 teachers can make visits to Year 6 classes to gain knowledge of the new intake of pupils, to help set curricular targets and to identify any groups of pupils that need additional support or are gifted and talented. Similarly, Year 6 teachers can make visits to observe lessons in Year 7. A development of this approach would be for Year 6 and Year 7 teachers to team-teach classes, or for schools to arrange teacher exchanges.

Year 7 teachers can work with Year 6 teachers to develop transfer and bridging units for use at the end of Key Stage 2 and the start of Key Stage 3. Alternatively they might adapt and use the units produced by the Key Stage 3 Strategy, QCA and some LEAs. Summer schools can be of benefit for targeted groups of pupils who have completed Year 6.

Teachers can work together to develop a study skills programme to be taught towards the end of Year 6 to prepare pupils for Key Stage 3 teaching and learning.

Year 7 teachers can work with Year 6 teachers to develop Key Stage 3 units of work that can be taught after the Key Stage 2 tests to enable an early start on the Key Stage 3 programmes of study.

Teachers can provide an early intervention programme, beginning in June of Year 6, for pupils working at level 3. This could be based on the Key Stage 3 National Strategy's Intervention Toolkit (DfES 0178/2003) for English and mathematics, and be continued in Year 7. Alternatively, schools might arrange for pupils working at level 3 to transfer to secondary school in June of Year 6, to receive extra teaching and support to prepare them for beginning Key Stage 3.

### EXAMPLES

- A technology college runs a transfer project for level 3 pupils from its partner primary schools. Pupils who agree to participate are taught an integrated curriculum of literacy, numeracy and ICT on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for five weeks beginning in June. Each curriculum area is taught for around 90 minutes on each of these days. In the holidays, a summer school is run for a week and learning mentors organise basic skills activities during the holiday.
4. How: increasing the pace of learning

Revising departmental schemes of work

Covering a programme of study in less than the normal time involves teachers making significant modifications to their schemes of work. These modifications may take many different forms as follows.

- Fewer units of work could be studied, while still complying with the requirement to cover all of the programme of study.

- Topics or areas of study could be revisited less frequently by studying them in greater detail on fewer occasions. There is still the need however to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate what they have learned.

- Related units of work in a subject could be combined and integrated.

- Particular units of work could cover more teaching objectives than they would have covered in a three-year scheme.

- The expectations of learning will have to be increased. Teaching objectives currently in the scheme of work for Year 9 may need to be taught in Year 8.

- Greater emphasis could be given to the key teaching objectives that are fundamental to developing secure understanding.

EXAMPLES

- One secondary school works with primary partners to improve continuity by making use of the time following Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests to teach the children some essential study skills which will help them to be more effective learners in Key Stage 3.

- One secondary school holds a science transfer day in July for pupils from its main partner primary schools. The day runs from 9:30 am to 3 pm and pupils are divided into mixed-attainment groups. Subject specialists lead the activities with support from NQTs, classroom assistants and learning mentors. Pupils undertake two science experiments, one to extract DNA from a kiwi fruit and another to learn about flame tests. There is also a design and technology activity for which pupils are prepared during Key Stage 2. Pupils are familiarised with CAD/CAM technology (computer-aided design, computer-aided manufacture) and use it to design a bridge. When they visit the secondary school for the transfer day, pupils use this design to model their bridge using paper and straws.

- Another secondary school is targeting Key Stage 2 level 5 pupils with three sessions of mathematics and three sessions of science between mid-June and July to consolidate topics in preparation for September. The school’s website enables Year 6 teachers to view its mathematics and science investigations as well as the transfer and bridging units and foundation topics.
Greater emphasis may need to be given to developing processes, such as skills of using and applying knowledge, or enquiry skills.

The content that is taught needs to avoid unnecessary repetition and build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Departments need to evaluate their schemes of work to ensure that they are appropriately challenging, emphasise connections between topics and focus on developing concepts and thinking skills rather than just concentrating on learning facts and techniques. Curriculum mapping between departments (agreeing when particular topics will be covered in each department) can help to avoid unnecessary repetition of work and make teaching more efficient. Where material is revisited, it should be more challenging, to ensure that pupils make progress. Curriculum mapping may also help teachers to be aware of opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, ICT and other skills across the curriculum.

For detailed subject-specific guidance on planning a two-year Key Stage 3, including modifications to the schemes of work, see the five separate two-year Key Stage 3 project publications, full references for which are given in the Appendix on page 62.

- Supplementary curriculum guidance: English
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: mathematics
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: science
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: ICT
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: foundation subjects and RE

**Improving the organisation of the curriculum**

When planning to cover a Key Stage 3 programme of study in less than three years, a school needs to consider how many hours of teaching time are needed for each subject. For example, a two-year Key Stage 3 school might decide to leave the teaching time allocated to each subject unchanged. Pupils would then complete the programme of study in two-thirds of the normal time. On the other hand, a school might decide that some of the time should be shifted from the saved year in the subject to increase the teaching time in the other years. This would offset the shorter period available for covering the programme of study. Teaching time can be shifted and adjusted between years, between subjects or between both years and subjects.
DIFFERENT TIME ALLOCATION MODELS

In these models, the subject was previously taught for four 50-minute periods a week over a three-year Key Stage 3. The Key Stage 3 programme of study is now covered in Years 7 and 8.

Model 1: NO CHANGES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF TIME
Four periods a week are still allocated to the subject across Years 7 and 8. The time in Year 9 is used for other work, such as going beyond the programme of study for Key Stage 3, starting a Key Stage 4 course, or engaging in other enrichment activities. In this model, all subjects could follow a two-year Key Stage 3 in Years 7 and 8.

Model 2: INCREASED TIME DURING YEARS 7 AND 8, REDUCED TIME IN YEAR 9
Extra teaching time is added to Year 7 or Year 8 or both. The time allocated to the subject in Year 9 is reduced. This will probably mean that the time allocated to another subject in Year 7 and/or Year 8 will need to be reduced. This model allows a few subjects to follow a two-year Key Stage 3 in Years 7 and 8, but as more subjects implement a two-year Key Stage 3 it becomes increasingly necessary for the saved year to be different in different subjects.

Model 3: THREE YEARS’ WORTH OF CLASSES IN TWO YEARS
Although the programme of study is covered in two years, it receives the same amount of lesson time as it did in the three-year Key Stage 3. Consequently, the subject is not taught at all in Year 9. This will probably mean that the time allocated to another subject in Year 7 and/or Year 8 will need to be reduced. As in model 2, as more subjects decide to implement a two-year Key Stage 3, they will have to identify different saved years.

Model 4: MORE COMPLEX CHANGES
Here, there is a slight increase in lesson time in Year 7 and a larger increase in Year 8 as pupils prepare for the National Curriculum test. The subject is also taught for two periods a week in Year 9, increasing the total teaching time over the three years. Time therefore has to be taken from another subject or subjects during the three years. Only some subjects can follow a two-year Key Stage 3 in this model, unless the overall teaching hours in the week are increased.
The example below shows how one school has opted for a slight increase in teaching time for some subjects over the two-year Key Stage 3 and compensates for this by giving extra time to the other subjects in Year 9.

**EXAMPLE**

In introducing a two-year Key Stage 3 for its core subjects, one school has increased the amount of teaching time given to them in Years 7 and 8. The extra time has been taken from the foundation subjects. In Year 9, the pattern is reversed and the foundation subjects receive compensating amounts of additional time at the expense of the core subjects.

### For each core subject:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREE-year Key Stage 3</th>
<th>TWO-year Key Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Year 8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 × 50-minute lessons (90 hrs per year)</td>
<td>4 × 50-minute lessons (120 hrs per year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 × 60-minute lessons (108 hrs per year)</td>
<td>4 × 60-minute lessons (144 hrs per year)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the three years, the total amount of teaching hours given to each subject is virtually unchanged. Previously, each core subject received a total of **330 taught hours** over the **three years** of Key Stage 3. Now, the Key Stage 3 programme of study receives a total of **252 taught hours** over the **two years** for each core subject. This means that although Key Stage 3 has been reduced by a third, from three years to two years, the Key Stage 3 teaching time has only been reduced by just less than a quarter.

All pupils who have reached at least the expected standard will take their statutory assessments at the end of Year 8.

Additionally, schools might find it useful to consider:

- whether some subjects, or some aspects or skills within a subject, should be prioritised by being given extra time;
- the most effective way of timetabling teaching time for a subject. For example, it might be a morning every four weeks rather than one 50-minute lesson every week;
- whether the length and timings of the school day are appropriate;
- making more use of time outside lessons, including the beginning and the end of the school day and school holidays.
**EXAMPLES**

- One school has reduced its lunch break and instituted rolling breaks to increase the amount of teaching time available. Pupils participating in a condensed Key Stage 3 undertake further work outside normal school hours. In addition to the school’s ICT club, ICT facilities are kept open to these pupils out of normal school hours.

- A school that has an established two-year Key Stage 3 believes it can now improve the efficiency of its school week. It has planned different lesson lengths, ranging from 45 to 200 minutes, at different times of the day. It expects, in due course, to have termly timetables that would, for example, give design and technology long, whole-morning sessions for one term followed by another term in which the subject would not be taught. It also plans to change the endings of the school day on certain days to incorporate additional extracurricular opportunities for the pupils.

- Another school has introduced a longer school day on one day a week. More practical courses have an extra hour on this day. This provides increased time for practical work, especially where equipment has to be set out and packed away again, and allows pupils to study a subject in greater depth.

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**Improving the quality of teaching and learning**

Implementing a condensed Key Stage 3 is not just about reorganising the structure of the curriculum. Schools need to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

A condensed Key Stage 3 should be the stimulus to produce more effective teaching: good teaching will result in secure learning. Good teaching involves:

- having high expectations of what pupils can achieve;

- creating an environment that promotes learning. Pupils need to feel challenged by high expectations and demanding targets but not to the degree that they become stressed;

- using assessment for learning to help pupils reflect on what they already know and set targets for the future. Assessment for learning can sharpen the focus of teaching and can help raise pupils’ attainment and improve their motivation and engagement. For example, objectives can be used in lessons to make the learning goals explicit and to act as the basis for assessment and curricular target setting;

- structuring teaching so that pupils are clear about what is to be learned and how it fits in with what they already know;
actively engaging pupils in their learning. Pupils need to feel that every lesson counts. Structured lessons that are divided into clear episodes help to maintain pace and challenge and enhance learning;

- developing pupils’ learning skills so that they become increasingly independent learners;

- employing a range of teaching strategies and techniques matched to a range of learning styles.

It is important to recognise that increasing the pace of teaching by covering more objectives in a shorter period does not necessarily lead to an increase in the pace of learning. More effective use of time within lessons will also be needed.

Schools can also exploit the potential for learning outside lessons, through visits and trips, clubs, homework and e-learning.

**EXAMPLES**

- In one school departments are introducing termly or half-termly extension packs to replace one-off homework tasks. The aim is that pupils should ‘work smarter, not harder’.

- In one school in the first term of Year 7 teachers have been asked to set aside their usual materials and textbooks and instead think about how to make maximum use of facilities such as museums, local sites of interest, film-making in the school’s video suite, adult expertise in the local community, and laptop computers. It is hoped that this will stimulate teachers to experiment with new approaches which they will then also incorporate into their Key Stage 3 teaching in later terms.

- One school is emphasising e-learning in ICT, design and technology and art and design. The school sought parental support for access to curriculum materials at home, either online or using CD-ROM. Suitable lessons are selected for pupils to access in electronic form in their own time at school or at home. These resources include lesson objectives, presentations, tutorials, tasks and online tests. There are also extended projects that pupils can access online.

- Pupils from a federation of schools have online access to the curriculum at home or school. A wider range of subjects is available to pupils since they can access other schools’ curricula through the Internet.
Making the most of the saved time

The time released by condensing the Key Stage 3 curriculum can be used in different ways either within the key stage or the 14–19 phase.

The 11–19 curriculum models below illustrate some of the ways in which the time released by a condensed Key Stage 3 could be used. These could describe the curriculum model for a whole cohort of pupils or, more likely, a particular group of pupils.

### 11-19 Curriculum Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceleration</td>
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<td>Access</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access + flexible KS4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrichment (Year 9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrichment (Year 8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrichment (Year 11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrichment (termly)</td>
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<td>Enrichment (weekly)</td>
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<td>Flexible KS4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key**
- **Key Stage 3 PoS**
- **Key Stage 4 courses**
- **Post-16 courses**
The conventional model

The conventional model will continue to be appropriate for many pupils and many subjects. Pupils might follow this model for some subjects while following some of the other models for other subjects.

The acceleration model

In this model the benefits of the saved year are reserved until Year 11. It offers increased pace but no greater depth or enrichment in Key Stage 3 or 4. However, there would be greater opportunities post-16. Pupils might be able to take a greater range of post-16 courses or they might study an A level or AVQ over three years rather than the normal two years.

Access models

These models might be appropriate for pupils who need to improve their basic skills, particularly literacy and numeracy, prior to embarking on Key Stage 3 programmes of study. The access curriculum could include various elements such as:

- targeted objectives from the Key Stage 2 programmes of study with focused use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy’s intervention materials;
- targeted objectives from the Key Stage 3 programmes of study presented within the framework of a more traditional primary model. For example, there might be substantial use of cross-curricular projects or teaching might take place within a single classroom by a single class teacher;
- greater emphasis on literacy, numeracy and ICT. For example, historical contexts might function primarily for learning, practising and using literacy skills rather than as a means for developing the historical skills, knowledge and understanding of the Key Stage 3 programme of study.
An access-based Key Stage 3 curriculum with targeted intervention might enable lower-attaining pupils to complete Key Stage 4 courses more successfully in Years 10 and 11. Alternatively, pupils might wish to spend three years on some Key Stage 4 courses.

### Enrichment models

Enrichment time could be located in particular years or it could be distributed across a key stage. The enrichment time could take place one term a year, with the other two terms dedicated to the Key Stage 3 programme(s) of study. Alternatively, a school might decide to teach the programme of study for three and a half days each week and devote the rest of the week to enrichment activities.

Enrichment activities might take the form of some or all of the following:
- studying curriculum content outside the National Curriculum, such as astronomy, philosophy, film studies, archaeology, non-Euclidean geometry;
- studying a National Curriculum subject in greater depth than would normally be possible, perhaps with greater use of project work and local resources such as museums and field trips;
- providing a specific focus on skills such as learning to learn, problem solving and team working;
- providing extracurricular activities such as voluntary and community work, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award projects, foreign exchanges, work experience.

Arranging enrichment activities in Year 8 could help to overcome the Year 8 dip in learning and motivate pupils for the remaining half of their Key Stage 3 in Year 9. Enrichment activities in Year 9 could provide a consolidation of Key Stage 3 learning and give pupils a firm foundation for embarking on GCSE courses in Year 10, especially if the enrichment anticipated GCSE study. Yearly, or even weekly, enrichment might spread the beneficial effects of enrichment – pupils’ improved motivation, for example – more consistently across the key stage. It might also motivate and re-engage pupils prior to starting on their Key Stage 4 courses.
A flexible Key Stage 4 model

This model benefits Key Stage 4. Pupils would be able to study some courses in Years 9 and 10, others in Years 10 and 11 or some or all courses over three years. They may simply study a course in greater depth, with more enrichment activities than might normally be possible, to motivate them and enhance learning. Alternatively, pupils could be given the opportunity to study additional one- or two-year courses.

11-19 flexibility: some points to consider

It is important that schools think carefully about curriculum design given the flexibility available to them. Some key points to consider are as follows.

Ensuring curriculum breadth, balance and entitlement

The curriculum in the saved year of a two-year Key Stage 3 may be narrowed if some National Curriculum subjects are not studied in that year, or may be unbalanced if some subjects are not given sufficient teaching time. It might be appropriate for a subject not to be taught for a term or year because it is given increased attention at other periods in the key stage, but any decision to omit a subject or reduce its overall teaching time needs to be very carefully weighed against the principles of breadth, balance and entitlement.

For example, all pupils have an entitlement to learn a modern foreign language. A saved year should not be regarded as an opportunity to release lower-attaining pupils from the opportunity to study a modern foreign language. Instead, it could be seen as an opportunity to develop innovative ways of helping them to learn a language.
Providing personalised curriculum pathways (not corridors)

The curriculum flexibilities of the 14–19 phase can be extended back into Year 9 as long as pupils have completed the Key Stage 3 programmes of study in Years 7 and 8. The increased flexibility enables schools to provide more personalised pathways through the 14–19 (or 13–19) curriculum for different groups of pupils. However, these pathways could become corridors and turn into a form of streaming, restricting pupils’ choice and their opportunity to achieve. In order to prevent this, some schools are providing groups of options containing GCSEs of different types and lengths and a range of other qualifications that are available to all pupils. Pupils combine their choices from the different groups to produce their personalised pathways.

Providing advice and guidance to pupils

Increased curriculum flexibility means that pupils will have more choices and therefore need to make more decisions about their learning. In particular, a flexible curriculum will impact on the guidance that pupils need when making their choices at the age of 14 or even 13. It is important that the pupils and their parents are genuinely involved in any decision making, and that decisions are not simply made for them by teachers who assume that they know what an individual pupil needs. Pupils and their parents need clear information and guidance based on thorough knowledge of particular pupils’ individual strengths and weaknesses, their capacity for work and effort, their interests and their aspirations. Helping pupils to match this information to the courses on offer will increase motivation and maximise achievement. Various learning activities, both in lessons and in other aspects of school life, will help pupils to evaluate different options and think through the implications of their decisions. In the period when pupils are choosing their options, it may be possible to give them sample lessons or taster sessions, especially in new and unfamiliar subjects. It is vital that pupils get the help they need to make informed decisions and keep their future opportunities open.

Considering mixed-age groups

Providing a more personalised curriculum will mean that different pupils progress through the curriculum at different rates. Some may complete the Key Stage 3 programmes of study in two years, others in three years. While most will probably start GCSE courses in Year 10 when they are aged 14, some may start a GCSE course at the age of 13 and others might not finish a GCSE course until they are 17 at the end of their Year 12. The conventional expectations about what pupils will be doing in each year will begin to be challenged. A school may decide that any pupil beginning a particular course will be in the same class, regardless of their age. In other words, pupils could be grouped according to their stage of learning rather than their age. In order to support this, some schools are therefore considering the possibility of ‘vertical’ tutor groups that contain pupils of various ages.
EXAMPLE

An alternative Year 7 curriculum

The aims of planning this alternative Year 7 curriculum were to:

- use Year 7 as a bridging year, smoothing the transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;
- enable all pupils to make better progress in Year 7 and across Key Stage 3;
- focus on developing the basic skills of lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 so that they had better access to Key Stage 3 programmes of study in Years 8 and 9;
- avoid problems caused by traditional streaming or banding of pupils;
- emphasise English, mathematics and ICT in Year 7, providing separate subject teaching for these and for modern foreign languages and physical education;
- develop cross-curricular problem-solving based project work as a key component of the curriculum involving science, humanities (history, geography, religious education), performing arts (art, music) and design and technology;
- emphasise literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum, particularly in the problem-solving lessons;
- reduce the number of teachers that pupils in Year 7 were taught by;
- develop a progressive Year 7 timetable that supported transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and moved closer to a more traditional Key Stage 3 model by the end of the year.

The following curriculum plan for Year 7 was developed based on these aims:

(25-hour week)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>En</th>
<th>Ma</th>
<th>ICT</th>
<th>MFL</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>Problem solving (Sc + Hi, Gg, RE + Mu, Ar + DT + citizenship)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9+5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A condensed Key Stage 3: Designing a flexible curriculum
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EXAMPLE

continued

Notes:

- There is increased time for the foundation subjects and science in Years 8 and 9.
- There are dedicated teachers for English, mathematics and ICT. In spring and summer terms the extra problem-solving lessons are taught by these teachers.
- Problem-solving lessons are taught either in tutor groups for all lessons or split between two teachers. The use of Key Stage 2 teachers has been discussed.

Some pupils will cover the Key Stage 3 programmes of study for some subjects in Years 7 and 8 while other pupils cover the same programmes of study in Years 8 and 9, or Years 7, 8 and 9. All pupils cover the programmes of study in the foundation subjects in Years 8 and 9. Consequently, for some pupils time will be saved in some subjects in Year 9, whereas for other pupils the saved time will be in Year 7.
Practical implementation issues

Pupils, staff, parents and governors

The introduction of a condensed Key Stage 3 depends on securing the support of all involved: pupils, staff, parents and governors. Governing bodies have specific legal responsibilities that they share with headteachers, which include ensuring that:

- the school provides a balanced and broadly based curriculum;
- the National Curriculum is taught;
- sufficient lesson time is provided for pupils to cover the National Curriculum and other requirements.

Parents may worry about whether their child will be able to cope with a faster pace of learning, or wonder if a condensed key stage means a lost year of schooling. Staff may have anxieties about the implications of a condensed key stage for different groups of pupils and worry about the effect of a two-year Key Stage 3 on their workload. They may have concerns about how the changes will affect their individual roles and their career development as teachers.

It is important to keep all those involved well informed of developments. They need to understand what a condensed Key Stage 3 is, and they need to understand the rationale for it. In making the case for a condensed Key Stage 3, it may be useful to explain:

- the background to the initiative (Section 2);
- the rationale for condensing the key stage (Section 2);
- the form which the condensed Key Stage 3 will take at the school and the potential advantages that it offers: most importantly, how specific groups of pupils will benefit;
- how it will affect those involved, and what measures will be taken to monitor and evaluate pupils’ progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9;
- the arrangements for taking the National Curriculum tests if programmes of study are to be completed by the end of Year 8 or earlier;
- the opportunities for individual pupils to switch between a condensed key stage and a conventional three-year Key Stage 3 if this is appropriate for them.
**Timetabling, staffing and resources**

A condensed Key Stage 3 is likely to have a significant impact on timetabling, staffing and resources, although the extent will vary according to the model adopted.

Decisions on timetabling, staffing and resources may also have to take account of parents’ views.

A school might find it useful to consider:

- how teachers are allocated to classes, including whether it would be helpful to timetable the same teacher to teach a particular class throughout the condensed key stage;
- avoiding split classes in the condensed key stage;
- extending into Year 7, or even into Year 8, the primary school model of having a number of subjects taught by a single class teacher;
- creating a dedicated team of specialist Key Stage 3 teachers;
- starting to construct the timetable with Year 7;
- the most effective way of grouping pupils;
- establishing a Key Stage 3 base for pupils.
A school that decided on a two-year Key Stage 3 in Years 7 and 8 felt that it had to secure the support not only of those involved in the school, but also of the teachers in the partner primary schools so that they would promote the idea to the children who were to transfer. The deputy headteacher of the secondary school therefore visited each feeder school to meet the staff and explain the intended benefits of the new structure.

Another school was initially uncertain how best to explain the introduction of a condensed Key Stage 3 to parents. On the one hand, a low-key approach, such as simply informing parents of the change during recruitment interviews for new pupils, might avoid causing any anxiety about a ‘radical new development’. On the other hand, arranging a special meeting for all parents might raise anxieties but would provide a better opportunity to promote the idea positively and deal directly with any concerns. In the end, the school adopted the second approach and also produced a leaflet for parents that was distributed to them before the meeting. The meeting was a complete success and parents were strongly supportive of the condensed key stage.

One school made a point of involving its curriculum governor in early discussions and encouraged her to attend as many as possible of the meetings in which the ideas were developed. Her attendance, even at very technical and detailed discussions, meant that she had a feel for the quality of debate and decision making and was able to report back positively to her fellow governors. Once the condensed Key Stage 3 was underway all governors were invited to observe lessons to see the faster pace of teaching and learning and to discuss the impact of the change with the teachers.
7 Monitoring and evaluation

It is important to monitor pupils’ progress and also review and evaluate the impact of the condensed programme in its wider context. Clearly pupils’ attainment and progress are key measures of the success of a condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Monitoring pupils’ progress

Schools need to set clear targets near the beginning of Year 7 for the National Curriculum levels that individual pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the key stage. Teachers will also want to set shorter-term curricular targets. These may be key learning objectives from a short unit of work, or they may identify particular learning that a pupil needs to have mastered by the end of a term. Such targets are useful in helping teachers and the pupils themselves to assess pupils’ progress towards their long-term targets.

In addition to the progress in their learning, pupils’ motivation, engagement with learning and behaviour also need to be monitored.

If monitoring reveals that any pupils are not making the expected progress, then a school may need to consider whether it is appropriate for it to continue on a condensed programme.

EXAMPLES

- One school has a database of pupils’ Key Stage 2 test results and uses LEA-produced software to generate Key Stage 3 targets. The pupils are regularly assessed in order to track pupils’ progress and to review the targets against current performance. Underachieving pupils are identified and given additional support. Higher-attaining pupils complete Key Stage 3 science in two years, while the other pupils have three years to complete the key stage.
End-of-key stage assessments

Teachers may need to decide when pupils will be entered for the National Curriculum tests.

A key decision when Key Stage 3 is covered in Years 7 and 8 is whether pupils should be entered for the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 8 or at the end of Year 9. It should not be assumed that all pupils would be entered at the end of Year 8. Teachers should only enter pupils at the end of Year 8 if they are convinced that the pupils are ready to take the tests. Some pupils may not be ready to take the tests at the end of Year 8 because they have not yet reached the expected standard of level 5/6. Some pupils may need another year to achieve their potential. For some pupils, their readiness for the tests may be greatest at that point when the Key Stage 3 material is fresh in their minds. Others may be better prepared for the tests a year later when they are more intellectually mature and have extended their skills, knowledge and understanding through their work on the Key Stage 4 programme of study.

EXAMPLES

- At one school National Curriculum tests in science will be taken by all pupils in Year 9 even though the Key Stage 3 programme of study will have been completed by the end of Year 8. This is because the school believes that a year of GCSE science is likely to improve pupils’ performance in the tests.
Evaluating a condensed Key Stage 3

Each school will need to monitor and evaluate whether a condensed Key Stage 3 is achieving its aims and bringing about improvements in:

- the pace of learning and standards of pupils’ attainment;
- pupils’ motivation and engagement;
- the transfer between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3;
- curriculum flexibility.

A school will obviously need to use a range of evaluation methods based on both quantitative and qualitative data. It is important that monitoring and evaluation is not left until the end of the programme. Schools will need to assess the impact of the condensed key stage throughout the programme, so that improvements can be made or pupils switched to a three-year programme if particular problems occur.

The following criteria may be useful when evaluating the success of the condensed key stage.

The pace of learning and standards of pupils’ attainment

- Pupils make better progress during lessons. For example, pupils following a two-year programme are learning at a faster rate than either previous cohorts of pupils who followed a three-year programme or a similar group of pupils currently following a three-year programme.

- Pupils following a condensed Key Stage 3 demonstrate improved attainment during lessons when compared to similar pupils following a three-year programme. Teachers might want to use particular pieces of work to make these comparisons. For example, they could use a piece of project work identical to that set for pupils in a previous cohort.
Pupils following a condensed curriculum achieve higher standards than may have been expected of pupils following a three-year programme in the optional tests and progress tests at the end of Year 7. For example, a greater percentage of pupils who entered Key Stage 3 below level 4 attain level 4 by the end of Year 7 than previously.

All pupils meet or exceed their individual targets for the end of the key stage. For example, all pupils make a gain of at least one level during the condensed programme and there is an increase in the percentage of pupils adding two levels during the key stage.

The percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 at the end of the key stage equals or is better than that expected from a three-year curriculum. For example, schools may want to compare the percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 in the core subjects to national attainment at the end of Year 9, the attainment of similar schools at the end of Year 9, or to the attainment of previous cohorts.

It is important to ensure that the attainment and progress of particular groups of pupils, such as boys, lower-attaining girls or pupils learning English as an additional language, are monitored and evaluated.

**Pupils’ motivation and engagement**

Pupils have a stronger engagement with their learning. This can be evaluated through observing lessons or talking to pupils and their parents. It may be measured through an increase in pupils’ participation in out-of-hours activities, or an improvement in the quality of homework.
Attitudes and behaviour improve within lessons and around school. Casual observation of pupils in lessons or around school and discussions with teachers or heads of year may indicate an improvement in attitudes and behaviour. However, this could also be measured by comparing effort grades awarded for pupils’ work, or analysing teachers’ use of a reward system for good behaviour.

 Attendance improves. For example, the attendance rate of pupils following the condensed programme could be compared with that of previous cohorts.

 There is a reduction in the number of fixed-term or permanent exclusions.

The transfer between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3

 There is neither ‘plateauing’ nor falling back after pupils transfer from Key Stage 2. The attainment and progress of pupils in Year 7 is improved. For example, pupils following a two-year programme achieve higher standards than previously in the optional tests and progress tests at the end of Year 7. Pupils also meet or exceed all curricular targets set for the end of the first term in Year 7.

 New arrangements aimed at improving transfer, such as the use of transfer or bridging units, should be evaluated and their impact assessed.
A useful source of information might be pupils’ own impressions about whether they are repeating material that they have previously learned. Year 6 teachers could also be asked to visit Year 7 lessons during the autumn term or review pupils’ written work in order to provide feedback on the progress that pupils have made since the end of Year 6.

Curriculum flexibility

The condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced for all pupils.

The saved time is used to offer an enriched and diversified curriculum in Key Stage 3 and the 14–19 phase. The key issues to evaluate are:

- how much flexibility has been created and for how many pupils?
- is the new curriculum sufficiently broad and balanced for all pupils?
- does the curriculum fully meet the needs of all pupils or are there any groups of pupils disadvantaged by it?
- in what ways does the curriculum build on what pupils have learned and enable them to achieve their potential?
Case studies

The case studies on the following pages illustrate the different explorative approaches to a two-year Key Stage 3 that have been adopted by schools participating in the two-year Key Stage 3 project. The individual schools chose these different approaches. The approaches are not necessarily endorsed by this guidance, but are a useful indication of the possible ways in which schools can make use of the flexibilities offered in the statutory requirements for the school curriculum. They also illustrate the type of issues that may be raised by taking advantage of these flexibilities.
CASE STUDY 1

High- and low-attaining pupils, science and ICT, Years 7 and 8

The school is a large 11–19 comprehensive with 2000 pupils, on the edge of a big suburban council estate. It has been designated a technology college since 1994 and is now in the fourth phase of its technology college funding. It has a comprehensive intake with pupils coming from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Rationale

The school wished to introduce a wider range of choices and pathways from the beginning of Year 9, particularly in science and technology, in which it has specialist status. It wanted to do this by improving the transfer from Key Stage 2 and planning two-year schemes of work in Key Stage 3. It believes that this will raise standards and it expects pupils to gain two National Curriculum levels during the two years of the key stage.

The aim is to allow pupils to mix and match general and vocational programmes with work-based learning opportunities, community work, leadership programmes and enrichment courses. The school is also keen to ensure that all pupils have a broad curriculum that goes beyond examination courses. It therefore includes elements such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and a photography enrichment course.

Pupils, subjects and years

Initially, the school targeted two groups of pupils in science: higher-attaining pupils who needed a greater challenge, and lower-attaining pupils who the school believes would be motivated by the earlier availability of vocational and other options in Year 9. Pupils were selected to follow a two-year programme in science based on their Key Stage 2 statutory assessments and MidYIS results. These pupils would complete the Key Stage 3 programme of study in Years 7 and 8. The average-attaining pupils followed a three-year programme and therefore served as a control group to help the school evaluate the impact of condensing the key stage. Following a successful first year of the project, the school decided that all pupils, including the average attainers, would complete the science programme of study in two years.

All pupils in ICT follow a two-year Key Stage 3 programme in Years 7 and 8. The school hopes in future years to be able to extend the two-year Key Stage 3 to other technology-related subjects, particularly design and technology and mathematics.

3 MidYIS is the Middle Years Information System, provided commercially by Durham University. It measures progress made in learning between the start of secondary school at ages 11, 12 or 13 and GCSE.
### CASE STUDY 1 continued

#### Key Stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stage 3</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-attaining pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td>Start GCSE science (double or triple award)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average-attaining pupils (first year of project)</td>
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<td>Start GCSE science (double award)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average-attaining pupils (second year of project)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Start GCSE science (single award)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-attaining pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>All pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GCSE ICT (short course)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Key Stage 4

**Common curriculum:**
- English GCSE/entry level (and English literature for most pupils in Year 11)
- Mathematics GCSE (and statistics for some pupils in Year 11)
- Short course DT and RE
- PE (non-examined)

**Plus**

**The equivalent of two GCSEs** (short course/single award/double award)

Plus one of the following menus:

- **Science GCSE** (single/double/triple award completed by end of Year 10)
- **ICT GCSE** (short course)

**Menu 1: General**
- AS (GCSE)

**Menu 2: Vocational**
- AS (VCE)

**Menu 3: Flexible learning**
- Both school-based and outside school, including learning support or mentoring

**Menu 4: Vocational and flexible learning**
- School-based for three days a week and with outside provider for two days a week

**Notes**
- GCSEs can be studied over two or three years
- The options are described as menus rather than pathways because choices from each group can be combined: they are not mutually exclusive choices

- Additional PE leading to junior Sports Leadership Award
- Duke of Edinburgh's bronze or silver awards
- Community service: voluntary activities
- Enrichment courses in photography, calligraphy, media, ICT, etc.
CASE STUDY 1

Increasing the pace of learning

The school sought to improve the transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 by timetabling staff in the science and ICT departments to work with the main partner primary schools. Teachers team-teach and work with primary colleagues in Year 6 in order to increase their knowledge of the prior performance of pupils and ensure that pupils are challenged and engaged from the very beginning of Year 7. Lessons therefore build upon work at Key Stage 2 rather than repeat it. Summer school provision has been extended beyond the existing literacy, numeracy and gifted and talented programmes to include science and ICT.

The length of the school day is under consideration and the school is planning to adopt a continental-style day. It is also reviewing the length of lessons and may consider reducing them from 75 minutes to 60 minutes to help increase the pace of learning. To improve the organisation of the curriculum, time allocations for each subject are being reviewed. More teaching hours will be allocated to ICT, and to science when the two-year pupils reach Year 9 and begin their GCSE courses.

The science and ICT departments have rewritten their schemes of work and have checked that they do not revisit work that the pupils have already covered.

The school is also planning to expand its e-learning activities. The aim is for pupils at the school and at the feeder schools to access curriculum materials online. Video conferencing is also being investigated.

Practical implementation

The main timetabling issue has been ensuring that staff can visit the partner primary schools during the school day. The school anticipates that the main impact upon the timetable will be in future academic years when the additional teaching time needed for GCSE science in Year 9 will affect the time allocation for other subjects.

Since pupils will progress through 13-19 options at different rates, some taking two years to complete their GCSEs and others taking three years, the school is looking into the possibility of ‘vertical’ tutor groups. They are considering having tutor groups containing pupils in Years 7 and 8, and other tutor groups for pupils from Years 9-13.

Monitoring and evaluation

The school has not yet made a final decision on when pupils will take the end-of-key stage test in science. The science department may enter a few of its highest-attaining pupils for the Key Stage 3 test at the end of Year 8, but it is planning to enter most of them at the end of Year 9 on the
assumption that a year’s extra learning in science is likely to improve their results. However, the school is also aware that delaying the test until the end of Year 9 may reduce the sense of purpose and energy which the two-year Key Stage 3 is intended to stimulate. The end-of-key stage teacher assessment for ICT will be carried out for all pupils at the end of Year 8 when they have completed the Key Stage 3 programme of study for ICT.

The school used Key Stage 2 test results and MidYIS data at the beginning of Year 7 to set pupils’ targets for the end of the key stage.

The science department tests pupils every five weeks. The department also uses self-assessment to help pupils gain a better understanding and awareness of the National Curriculum levels. The ICT department is currently rewriting and reviewing all formal assessments. ICT staff are also placing a greater emphasis on self-assessment for pupils.

Pupils’ attainment levels are reported to parents every half-term. Form tutors use these grades to monitor pupils’ progress. Heads of department also use them for departmental monitoring. These grades assist the heads of department in determining whether pupils are making the expected progress against the targets they have been set. The grades are also used to set pupils’ curricular targets. They also help the senior leadership team to monitor whether individual pupils are following the appropriate pathway. For example, pupils who were initially being targeted to start GCSE single award science in Year 9 but are making better progress than expected could then work towards a double award GCSE, beginning in either Year 9 or Year 10.

The school set up a project management group that works closely with heads of department, pastoral staff, the assessment team and staff in the feeder primaries as well as with parents and pupils.
CASE STUDY 2

High-attaining pupils, all subjects, Years 7 and 8

The school is an 11–16 performing arts college in an urban location. A significant number of its 1100 pupils come from socially deprived backgrounds.

Rationale
The school adopted a condensed Key Stage 3 because it wanted to improve its Key Stage 3 curriculum. The school felt that its existing Key Stage 3 curriculum had not been taught in a way that was sufficiently exciting or stimulating.

Pupils, subjects and years
A group of 30 high-attaining pupils follow a two-year programme. They were selected on the basis that they had either achieved level 5 in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 or met 75% of the school's criteria for identifying gifted and talented pupils.

It was decided that all National Curriculum subjects should be involved so that every department in the school would benefit from the challenge of the two-year Key Stage 3. The condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum is covered in Years 7 and 8.

The school decided that the highest-attaining pupils should follow a two-year programme because it believed that they were the ones most in need of a more engaging curriculum. However, it hopes to spread this initiative to all pupils in the near future.

Increasing the pace of learning
The school already promoted a wide range of learning styles, so to improve the transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 the partner primary schools identify each pupil's preferred learning style. During the first week of Year 7, teachers introduce the pupils to different learning techniques and to thinking skills that should help them to deal more effectively with Key Stage 3 work.

The school decided that ICT would be taught as an integral part of all subjects. The intention was to improve the organisation of the curriculum and reflect the school’s performing arts specialism. A timetabled slot for multimedia studies, which includes film making, photography and media studies, was introduced to make the curriculum more stimulating and directly relevant to pupils’ interests.
The Year 7 timetable has been extended by half an hour one day a week. This enables all Year 7 pupils to use an independent learning system to help develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

To improve teaching and learning, the school timetable has been changed to three lessons a day, each 1 hour 40 minutes long. The aim of the longer periods is to encourage teachers to include a variety of activities in each lesson. All departments have rewritten their schemes of work and have checked that they do not revisit work that the pupils have already learned. The school wants to build on its existing homework club by enabling pupils to access learning materials from home via the school's website.

The school intends to plan a Year 9 curriculum that, with the exception of physical education and religious education, will focus on cross-curricular extended projects that exploit the school's good links with the local university.

For example, the school's science and physical education teachers will work with its pupils and university undergraduates on sports science projects, enabling the pupils to carry out real scientific research that will involve the use of statistics and ICT for analysis. Other projects will include The Impact of Technology on Warfare and The Media's Influence on Public Opinion, which will include aspects of ICT, media studies, politics, citizenship and journalism. There are also plans for a summer school centred on multimedia cross-curricular projects.

The aims of this project work are to develop higher-order thinking and learning skills and to introduce pupils to the future prospect of degree courses at university. The school believes that this is very important given its context as an 11–16 school in a socially deprived area. The school hopes that the year of extended projects will equip its pupils with the skills and ambitions to complete advanced level courses in the sixth form college. At present, many of the school's past pupils abandon their sixth form college courses.

**Practical implementation issues**

The school wrote to all parents of Year 6 children explaining the nature of the two-year Key Stage 3 and inviting them to consider whether it might be appropriate for their child. Only pupils nominated by their parents were considered for the two-year programme.

The first cohort of two-year Key Stage 3 pupils represented an additional teaching group that was timetabled separately from other Year 7 groups.
CASE STUDY 2

Monitoring and evaluation

Key Stage 3 targets for each pupil in the group were set during the first term of Year 7. They were based on Key Stage 2 results and CAT (Cognitive Ability Test) scores. Short-term curricular targets are also regularly set. Academic tutors monitor pupils’ progress towards their long-term targets through individual meetings with pupils held three times a year. Mid-term and end-of-year reports include teachers’ predictions of what the pupil is likely to achieve by the end of Key Stage 3. Decisions about when a pupil will take the Key Stage 3 tests will be taken following discussions with the pupil, teachers and parents. It is hoped that pupils will take the tests at the end of Year 8.

The school’s evaluation of the two-year programme will include surveys of pupils and parents, as well as analysis of data on pupils’ performance.
CASE STUDY 3

High- and average-attaining pupils, core subjects, Years 7 and 9

This school is an 11–18 comprehensive school located in a suburban area with 1250 pupils on roll. The percentage of its pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than the national average but its pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school has been designated a specialist visual arts college since September 2003.

Rationale

The main aim of the school is to revitalise Year 8 to avoid problems of pupils’ faltering pace and poor engagement. In Year 8, pupils will be presented with new and demanding challenges. The school is also determined that the two-year Key Stage 3 will improve transfer from Key Stage 2 and foster a wider range of teaching and learning techniques.

Pupils, subjects and years

Two groups of pupils were selected to follow the condensed programme, the selection having been based on Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results.

Group 1 contains the highest-attaining pupils: those who gained three level 5s, or two level 5s and one level 4, in the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests. This group will cover the Key Stage 3 English and mathematics programmes of study in Years 7 and 8 and begin GCSE English and mathematics in Year 9. Key Stage 3 science is split between Years 7 and 9. The pupils study some GCSE modular science units in Year 8. These units were chosen to:

- be relevant and accessible to Year 8 pupils;
- broaden and deepen pupils’ knowledge of science;
- build on the school’s scheme of work for science in Year 7;
- relate closely to the school’s scheme of work for science in Year 9;
- provide motivating and engaging contexts for learning science.

Group 2 consists of pupils who attained three level 4s, or one level 5 and two level 4s, in the Key Stage 2 tests. These pupils will cover Key Stage 3 English and science programmes of study in Years 7 and 9. Year 8 will be used for a variety of science projects, including CASE projects and some cross-curricular work, intended to enhance their written and investigative skills. Pupils follow a usual three-year programme for mathematics.

CASE, Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education, is a programme to develop thinking skills in science lessons.
CASE STUDY 3
continued

Increasing the pace of learning
To improve transfer, each partner primary school has been assigned a teacher from the secondary school. This teacher acts as the point of contact, visits the school, observes lessons, develops bridging units and teaches some Year 6 English, mathematics and science lessons. Similarly, Year 6 teachers from the partner primary schools visit the secondary school, observe lessons and give feedback on pupils’ progress. Each core subject department is developing stronger ties with the primary schools. Summer schools focusing on subject-specific skills are being targeted at potential two-year Key Stage 3 pupils.

The school is promoting a wider range of teaching and learning styles. For example, teachers are being encouraged to make greater use of educational visits. Already, there are increases in the number of visits by pupils to theatre productions and science museums, and in the number of visits to the school by speakers, writers and poets. Links with the local university are used to allow pupils to experience some mathematics teaching in a different environment. The science department is planning to make greater use of external agencies, such as local companies that use science in the course of their business and the local university.

The English, mathematics and science departments have rewritten their schemes of work to increase the pace of learning.

Pupils are being encouraged to make more use of e-learning. Additional computers have been installed with curriculum materials, teacher tutorials, homework and schemes of work available online.

Practical implementation issues
Staff visits to primary schools have caused some timetabling problems in covering lessons.

The development of subject-specific e-learning packages has increased the pressure on computer suites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KS3 English</td>
<td>KS3 English + NC test</td>
<td>GCSE English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS3 science</td>
<td>GCSE science modules</td>
<td>KS3 science + NC test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS3 mathematics</td>
<td>KS3 mathematics + NC test</td>
<td>GCSE mathematics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KS3 English</td>
<td>Cross-curricular writing and investigative skills development</td>
<td>KS3 English + NC test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS3 science</td>
<td>KS3 science + NC test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS3 mathematics</td>
<td>KS3 mathematics + NC test in Y9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monitoring and evaluation

Pupils are set end-of-key stage targets based on Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, CAT tests and MidYIS\(^5\) data. In each subject, knowledge, understanding and effort are regularly assessed and the results are used to set curriculum targets. Self-assessment is also a prominent feature of learning. Teacher assessments for all pupils are collated at the end of each term and used for the termly review of pupils’ progress and targets as well as for reports to parents.

The first group of pupils will take the QCA Year 8 optional tests at the end of Year 7 and it is expected that they will be ready to sit the Key Stage 3 tests in mathematics and English at the end of Year 8. The second group will take the optional tests at the end of Year 8, followed by the Key Stage 3 tests in English and science at the end of Year 9. Since the second cohort studies Key Stage 3 mathematics across Years 7, 8 and 9, they will take the National Curriculum test at the end of Year 9.

The two-year Key Stage 3 programme will be evaluated primarily by:

- heads of department using assessment data to monitor pupils’ progress against their targets;
- monitoring the views of pupils, parents and teachers from the school and its primary feeder schools through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups;
- monitoring indicators of pupils’ behaviour and attitudes.

There are formal project evaluation meetings every half-term between heads of department, the senior management team and LEA consultants. School staff involved in the project meet more frequently.

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\(^5\) MidYIS is the **Middle Years Information System**, provided commercially by Durham University. It measures progress made in learning between the start of secondary school at ages 11, 12 or 13 and GCSE.
CASE STUDY 4

All pupils, all subjects, Years 7 and 8

The school is a middle-deemed secondary school covering the 9–13 age range. It has 750 pupils drawn from an area of significant social deprivation as measured by crime rates, levels of education among adults, pregnancy rates among teenagers and unemployment. It is collaborating with the other partner middle schools and the local high school to develop a two-year Key Stage 3.

Rationale

There was an agreed view between the partner schools that pupils’ performance initially dipped when they transferred to the high school at the beginning of Year 9 and that this affected their achievements in the Key Stage 3 tests at the end of their first year in the new school. All the partner schools were confident that they could increase the pace of learning, eradicate the dip in performance and raise standards if they completed the programmes of study in two years and pupils took the tests at the end of Year 8.

Additionally, as the school has the pupils from the beginning of Year 5, the effects of the transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 could be minimised as it could use the time after the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 to start Key Stage 3 work. The improved progress that the pupils could make during Year 7 increases the potential for raising standards.

Since pupils leave the middle school at the end of Year 8 to go to the high school, a two-year Key Stage 3 fits neatly into the educational structure: the end of the key stage coincides with the end of middle school.

Pupils, subjects and years

All pupils follow a two-year Key Stage 3 in all subjects since their rationale for adopting a two-year programme is equally applicable to all.

Increasing the pace of learning

To improve the organisation of the curriculum, the school reviewed the teaching time for each subject. It slightly increased the teaching time for the core subjects to improve pupils’ basic skills.

The school is considering changing the way it groups pupils. Currently, pupils are set in the core subjects and in French, history and geography.

After-school clubs in several subjects have been established, in addition to the existing homework club.

To improve teaching and learning the school is focusing on a number of initiatives, which include:
improving the school's use of assessment for learning and increasing the use of self-assessment for pupils;

- encouraging all teachers to raise their expectations of pupils significantly and to communicate these higher expectations to pupils and parents;

- providing targeted learning programmes for individual pupils and increasing the use of academic mentoring and summer schools;

- focusing on teaching pupils a range of cross-curricular process skills;

- giving pupils increased access to e-learning opportunities, particularly through the development of a new website. This will enable pupils to access learning materials, from home as well as in school, submit work electronically for assessment, and have their progress records maintained electronically on the computer network;

- adopting new approaches to homework. For example, in science, those aspects of scientific investigations that do not require a laboratory will be covered in homework;

- rewriting and modifying schemes of work. For example, history will rationalise coverage of topics over Years 5–8 to avoid repetition and to concentrate on skill development. Improved planning will involve more independent study and more efficient linking of units.

The improved curriculum flexibility will mean that all pupils will be able to start Key Stage 4 programmes when they move to the high school. This is based on the expectation that pupils have completed the Key Stage 3 programmes of study and achieved the expected standard of level 5/6. Some pupils would then take GCSEs early and some would be able to take additional GCSEs, particularly in science where there would be more opportunity for pupils to study three separate sciences. Other pupils would be able to spend three years preparing for their GCSEs. It will be possible for the high school to provide a wider range of pathways from 13–19.

**Practical implementation issues**

The school identified that one of the most immediate practical issues was providing the necessary professional development for staff to support the changes in teaching and learning.

There were also practical issues in determining which members of staff would be responsible for developing the website that will provide the enhanced e-learning opportunities.
CASE STUDY 4

continued

Monitoring and evaluation

Teachers make regular formal assessments after the completion of each unit of work, as well as termly and annually. The optional National Curriculum tests are also used to assess pupils’ progress. The evaluation of the two-year Key Stage 3 will be based on:

- data on pupils’ performance provided by teachers, the optional National Curriculum test results, the end-of-Key Stage 3 tests, and, in the longer term, GCSE results;
- questionnaires and focused interviews to collect views from samples of pupils, parents and teachers;
- additional reading and spelling tests;
- indicators of pupils’ behaviour, such as statistics from the school’s reward system in which pupils earn merits and demerits.
CASE STUDY 5

All pupils, most subjects, alternative Year 7

This specialist sports college is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive school in a London suburb with severe socio-economic deprivation. 49% of the households rely on Income Support. There are high levels of violent crime, vandalism, drug and alcohol abuse, racial tensions, educational underachievement and school exclusions.

Rationale

The school wanted to find a stimulating way to introduce its pupils to the secondary curriculum. It became part of the Royal Society of Art’s Opening Minds project and substantially redesigned its Year 7 curriculum. Planning a two-year Key Stage 3 in many subjects released them from the requirements of the Key Stage 3 programmes of study in Year 7. This meant that the teachers could concentrate on devising interesting learning activities without worrying whether they were covering the programmes of study.

The Opening Minds project aims to develop five skills or ‘competences’ expressed in terms of what pupils could achieve having progressed through the curriculum:

- learning: knowing your own learning style, enjoying your power to learn, increasing your creative talents and gaining satisfaction from your efforts;
- citizenship: understanding ethics and values in society, understanding cultural diversity, managing your life and money;
- relating to people: cooperating with others and planning methods to reach targets you set, taking on different roles in team work, cooperating with others to achieve the task set;
- managing situations: revising existing plans, completing tasks within the set time, identifying when you have reached a satisfactory level, being able to work out reasons why you were not successful;
- managing information: planning and organising how you will find out the information you need in the most effective way, carrying out your own plan using only relevant information that you have put in your own words.

6 For further details of the Opening Minds project see the RSA publication Opening Minds: Education for the 21st Century, www.thersa.org
**CASE STUDY 5 continued**

**Pupils, subjects and years**

The school decided that all pupils would cover the Key Stage 3 programmes of study for English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and physical education throughout Years 7–9. All other subjects would follow the programmes of study only in Years 8 and 9. In Year 7 these subjects would be studied through the Opening Minds curriculum. This may include elements of the programmes of study, but such inclusion is incidental rather than deliberate.

**Increasing the pace of learning**

Throughout Years 7–9, pupils have a weekly teaching timetable of 30 periods, each lasting 50 minutes. In Year 7 the periods are allocated as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Minds</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Opening Minds curriculum is a series of six thematic modules. Each one lasts for half a term (72 periods) and is taught by only one or two teachers, apart from occasional contributions from a specialist ICT teacher. On four days a week Opening Minds is a double period and on one day it is four periods – a whole morning.

The first module that the pupils study is ‘Out and About’. It concerns environmental awareness and gives pupils the experience of having to be self-reliant. They camp in a field, cook for themselves and learn about having to get on with each other. It focuses on the RSA competence ‘Relating to People’. The practical activities are immensely popular with the pupils and help them to get to know each other in the first weeks of their new school. They also provide an opportunity for lower-attaining pupils to demonstrate that they possess talents that may not be recognised in a classroom. Another module is ‘Roman Around’. Some of the themes in this
module include the Roman invasion of Britain (history), Roman politics (citizenship), making chariots (design and technology) and mosaics (art and design). The ‘Identity’ module includes aspects of PSHE, geography, and art and design and involves examining British identity, self-identity, paintings in the National Portrait Gallery and local sites connected with Henry VIII.

The fact that only one or two teachers teach a six-week module means that pupils are supported in making a gradual change from the class teacher system of their primary schools to being taught by numerous teachers in the secondary school. Additionally, the Opening Minds lessons all take place in a base room, which provides pupils with a familiar learning environment.

Towards the end of Year 7 the separate subject elements in the projects are made more explicit with some separate subject teaching beginning to appear. In this way, pupils are prepared for the completely subject-based curriculum of Year 8.

Teaching time in Years 8 and 9 is allocated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSHE/Citizenship/Careers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practical implementation issues**

Initially, teachers were apprehensive about teaching the wide range of subjects embraced by each Opening Minds module. Consequently some training on subject-specific elements of the modules was provided. Teachers quickly became confident when they discovered that with suitable guidance it was even possible for unmusical teachers to teach aspects of music to Year 7 pupils. They also recognised that in the same way that Year 6 teachers teach all subjects, they should be able to teach a range of subjects in Year 7 with suitable support and guidance.

The adoption of the Opening Minds project in Year 7 means that Year 7 is now viewed as a much more important year in the management and organisation of the school. Timetabling is first completed for Year 11, then Year 7, and only then for Years 10 through to 8. The school expects that with much more attention now focused on pupils’ early experiences of the school, they will be more motivated and more successful throughout school, achieving better results at the end of Year 11.
CASE STUDY 5 continued

Monitoring and evaluation

The school uses end-of-Key Stage 2 attainment data, CAT scores and reading test scores as baseline data. Pupils’ progress towards their targets is monitored against these baselines. Pupils are regularly assessed and their attainment is reported to parents three times a year. The school has an established system of academic monitoring across all year groups. It intends to enter pupils for the end-of-key stage tests in Year 9, although early entry for some pupils in Year 8 has not been ruled out. The Opening Minds curriculum is assessed using the RSA competences.

The school completed an extensive end-of-year 1 evaluation of their Opening Minds curriculum. They noted a reduction in exclusions and improved attendance figures.
CASE STUDY 6

All pupils, all subjects, different years

This is a Church of England, 11–18 mixed comprehensive school in a deprived inner-city area. 44% of its pupils claim free school meals. It has a significant intake of refugee students. 34% of pupils do not have English as their first language and approximately 63 different languages are spoken. There are 15 main partner primary schools and 103 in total. It was officially opened as a City Academy in September 2003. Significant rebuilding and refurbishment work is underway with an emphasis on improving ICT facilities. All classrooms are being fitted with projectors linked to the computer network.

Rationale

The school wanted to provide a more flexible curriculum to cater for the wide differences in the prior attainment of its pupils. It also wanted to improve the transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, especially for lower-attaining pupils who often found the transfer difficult.

Pupils, subjects and years

The seven-form entry to the school is divided into three attainment groups. There is a different structure to the Key Stage 3 curriculum for each group:

| Lower attainers | One group of pupils entering below National Curriculum level 3 in English, mathematics and science |
| Average attainers | Four groups of pupils |
| Higher attainers | Two groups of pupils |

### Lower attainers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge-based learning</td>
<td>Core subjects + ICT</td>
<td>Applied and work-related learning options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DT, humanities, creative arts, MFL (in Year 8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Average attainers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core subjects + ICT + MFL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DT, humanities, creative arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Start: RE GCSE 3 GCSE equiv.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Higher attainers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td>Start: Some GCSEs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 7 used as transfer year with emphasis on skills needed to access the KS3 curriculum

GCSE courses in core subjects and ICT begin after the National Curriculum tests in Year 9

Pupils could take National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 8

Reduced time in core subjects allows a second MFL to be studied
CASE STUDY 6 continued

All pupils are fully integrated for creative arts, design and technology, physical education, PSHE and assembly.

The amount of teaching time dedicated to each subject varies according to the needs of the different groups of pupils. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7 teaching time (50-minute lessons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lower attainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humanities including RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creative arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Increasing the pace of learning**

In order to make a prompt start at the beginning of Year 7, the school organises a range of transfer activities that take place between Easter of Year 6 and the early part of Year 7. These include Key Stage 3 taster lessons, summer schools and online bridging projects.

The first two weeks of Year 7 for all pupils are devoted to ‘challenge-based learning’ delivered by a small team of Year 7 teachers. Pupils are set various challenges which they respond to by working in small groups with the support of their teachers. Examples of challenges include:

- establishing a Year 7 shop to operate in the lunch break for three days a week;
- publishing a Year 7 newspaper;
- setting up a Year 7 pupils’ advice centre that provides information about the new school and operates in the lunch hour for one week.

All challenges involve using and applying English and mathematics skills. Other subjects are involved according to the nature of the challenge. For example, the newspaper challenge has an emphasis on using ICT skills.

Delivering challenge-based learning for all pupils in the first two weeks helps the school to assess pupils’ strengths and weaknesses and allocate them to the appropriate group. It also provides pupils with an enjoyable start to secondary school life.
CASE STUDY 6
continued

This programme continues as a central feature of Year 7 for the lower-attaining pupils. Its purpose is to strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills before they begin the Key Stage 3 programmes of study for core subjects in Year 8. It is taught by a single teacher in a base room. This supports these pupils in making a more gradual change from the primary system that they are familiar with to the unfamiliar organisation of a secondary school.

The final challenge of the year is a trip to France which the pupils plan and organise throughout the year. This includes learning some French in preparation for the trip.

Practical implementation issues

Practical issues that the school had to address included:

- timetabling the lower-attaining group with fewer teachers;
- allocating a primary-trained teacher to the lower-attaining group;
- providing a teaching base for the lower-attaining group;
- arranging the timetable to ensure inclusive provision in creative arts, technology and physical education;
- timetabling the option groups in Years 9 and 10 to reflect pupils’ choices;
- devising and writing the challenge-based learning activities: very detailed materials were needed to support pupils at each stage of each challenge.

Monitoring and evaluation

Pupils’ progress in each subject is regularly assessed and interim targets are set. Self-assessment is also a feature of learning. QCA optional and progress tests are used as appropriate to monitor pupils’ progress towards their targets. The school intends to enter all pupils for the end-of-key stage tests in Year 9.

The school is evaluating the impact of the curriculum changes by comparing attainment to that of previous cohorts and also by monitoring the progress of individual pupils towards their targets. Their evaluation also involves the use of questionnaires for pupils and teachers.
Appendix: sources of further guidance

Background to a two-year Key Stage 3

- Green Paper, Schools: Building on Success 2001
  http://www.dfes.gov.uk/buildingonsuccess

- Education Act 2002
  Copies of this can be ordered via the HMSO website, which also contains the Act in full.

Planning a flexible Key Stage 3

- Designing the Key Stage 3 curriculum

- Supplementary curriculum guidance: English (DfES 0334/2003)
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: mathematics (DfES 0335/2003)
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: science (DfES 0336/2003)
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: ICT (DfES 0381/2003)
- Supplementary curriculum guidance: foundation subjects and RE (DfES 0380/2003)

Guidance on curriculum design for the 14–19 phase (and therefore potentially the 13–19 phase) can be found at www.qca.org.uk/14–19

Guidance on National Curriculum subjects and religious education

- The National Curriculum: handbook for secondary teachers in England
  This includes non-statutory guidelines for personal, social and health education.
  www.nc.uk.net

- Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfES 0019/2001)
- Framework for teaching mathematics: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfES 0020/2001)
- Framework for teaching science: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfES 0136/2002)
- Framework for teaching ICT capability: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfES 0321/2002)
- Framework for teaching modern foreign languages: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfES 0084/2003)
  www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3
QCA/DFES schemes of work: science, ICT, design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art and design, music, physical education, citizenship, religious education
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes3

Drug, alcohol and tobacco education: Curriculum guidance for schools at key stages 1–4 is available from QCA (QCA 03/031)

Further guidance on religious education is provided in DFE Circular 1/94, and
in Religious education: non-statutory guidance, available from QCA (QCA 00/576)

**Guidance on other statutory requirements**

- Guidance on sex and relationship education is available from the DfES (DfES 0116/2000)
- Changes of School Session Times (England) Regulations 1999 (1999/2733) sets out the consultation procedure to be followed if the governing body wishes to change the times or length of school sessions

**Other useful publications**

- Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties, QCA
  www.nc.uk.net/ld/

- Guidance on teaching gifted and talented pupils, QCA
  www.nc.uk.net/gt/

- Key Stage 3 National Strategy:
  Key messages from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy (DfES 0208/2003)
  Key messages: Pedagogy and practice (DfES 0125/2003)
  Assessment for learning – Whole school training materials (DfES 00443-2004 G)
  Teaching and learning pedagogical pack (DfES 0423-2004 G)
  www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

- Report of the independent commission on the organisation of the school year, Local Government Association (tel: 020 7664 3299)