

Introduction

For generations, parents have found themselves visiting primary schools with their children only to hear themselves saying, "It's not like when I was at school." Things change quickly in education, and at no time in the past 25 years has that been truer than September 2014 when the whole school curriculum changed for maintained schools throughout England.

This guide is intended to support parents of primary school children. Obviously it would be impossible to set out in detail everything your child would learn during their six years of statutory primary education, but by providing an outline of typical content and some background information about how the curriculum and assessment works, hopefully it will help parents support their children in making the most of their education.

2014 National Curriculum

English, Maths and Science remain very important and are considered the core subjects in both primary and secondary education. The National Curriculum sets out in some detail what must be taught in each of these subjects, and they will take up a substantial part of your child's learning week. Alongside these are the familiar foundation subjects: Art, Computing, Design & Technology, Foreign Languages (age 7+ only), Geography, History, Music, and Physical Education. For these foundation subjects, the details in the curriculum are significantly briefer: schools have much more flexibility regarding what they cover in these subjects.

Much of the publicity about the changes to the curriculum focussed on 'higher expectations' in various subjects, and it is certainly the case that in some areas the content of the new primary curriculum is significantly more demanding than in the past. For example, in mathematics there is now much greater focus on the skills of arithmetic and also on working with fractions. In science, a new unit of work on evolution is introduced for Year 6, work which would have previously been studied in secondary school. In English lessons there will now be more attention paid to the study of grammar and spelling, an area which was far less notable in previous curricula.

Depth of Learning

If your child is achieving well, rather than moving on to the following year group's work, school will encourage more in-depth and investigative work to allow a greater mastery and understanding of concepts and ideas.

Tests your child will take

Lots of schools use tests at all stages of their work. For the most part, these are part of a normal classroom routine, and support teachers' assessment. However, at certain stages of schooling there are also national tests which must be taken by all children in state schools. Often informally known as 'SATs', the National Curriculum Tests are compulsory for children at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Children in these year groups will undertake tests in Reading, Mathematics, and Grammar, Punctuation & Spelling. The tests will be sent away for marking, and results will be reported to schools and parents at the end of the year.

Children in Year 1 will take place in phonics screening tests which will be administered in school by a trained member of staff and children in Year 4 will be tested on their knowledge of times tables up to 12x12. This test will take place on a computer or tablet and will be administered in school by the children's class teacher.

Where previously these tests – and other teacher assessments – were graded in levels (normally numbering between Level 1 and Level 6 in primary school), from 2016 the tests are now reported as a scaled score, with a score of 100 representing the expected level for each age group. Schools will provide accompanying information to parents to explain how children are progressing.

Using this guide

The content in this guide is set out – based on the National Curriculum – in year groups. However, all schools are different: some have mixed year groups, some may only have one or two classes overall. Consequently, schools are allowed to reorganise content between year groups as long as the material is covered by the end of primary school. From year to year, we may therefore make some changes to the teaching sequence set out below:

For more information on the National Curriculum please visit www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum