

A Parent's Guide to the National Curriculum

How is **your child** doing at

# Secondary School?

Read on



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

to find out  
**more**  
about the  
**National Curriculum**  
in Wales,  
including the  
assessment, testing +  
reporting arrangements for

# 2008

## This booklet

will give you a **clear**  
idea of what your  
child is being taught,

how his / her progress  
will be measured,

+ help you to prepare for  
discussions with  
teachers about how  
your child is getting  
on at Secondary School.



[www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills)

# This booklet

explains about the National Curriculum in Wales, and how the assessment, testing and reporting arrangements fit into the framework. It will give you a clearer idea of what your child is being taught, how his or her progress will be measured, and help to prepare you for discussions with teachers about how your child is getting on.

Please address comments on any aspect of this booklet to:

**School Improvement Branch  
Schools Management and Effectiveness Division  
Department for Children, Education  
and Lifelong Learning and Skills  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ**

**A Parent's Guide for Primary Schools** is also available.

Both Guides are available in Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Gujarati, Punjabi, Somali, Urdu and Polish.

Both Guides are available in Braille on request.

If you would like more copies of this booklet, please ask the school or telephone the

Publications Order Line on **029 2082 6010**

email: [Parentsguides@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Parentsguides@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

or visit: [www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills)

**Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales**

- **Information for Parents and Carers** Booklet is also available.

Please telephone **029 2082 6078**

or use the email

or website address above to obtain a copy.

Yr Adran Plant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau  
Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



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# What is your child being taught ?

The **National Curriculum** is designed to provide a firm foundation in language, mathematics and science, and to provide children between the ages of 5 and 16 with the opportunity to achieve their best within a broad and balanced curriculum.

Your child will follow the National Curriculum through four **Key Stages** of his or her compulsory school life. These are:

**Key Stage 1** from 5 to 7 years;

**Key Stage 2** from 7 to 11 years;

**Key Stage 3** from 11 to 14 years; and

**Key Stage 4** which takes pupils to the age of 16.

The National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 is made up of the following subjects:

English, Welsh\*, Mathematics, Science, Design and Technology, Information Technology, a Modern Foreign Language, History, Geography, Music, Art and Physical Education (PE).

At Key Stage 4 the National Curriculum comprises only five subjects:

English, Welsh, Mathematics, Science and PE.

This allows pupils to choose additional subjects and courses for GCSE or vocational qualifications.

Children must also study **Religious Education** (according to the syllabus laid down by the local authority) and all schools are required to provide some **Personal and Social, Work-Related, Careers** and **Sex Education**.

Each school has documents which set out the National Curriculum requirements, the local syllabus for Religious Education and the frameworks for Personal and Social and Work-Related Education. The school decides its own curriculum taking account of these requirements and organises its own timetable. Teachers draw up lesson plans and decide which text books and other teaching materials to use. It is up to the school to ensure that its curriculum meets the legal requirements.

More information about the curriculum can be found at:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills>

\* = Welsh is taught mainly as a first language in Welsh-speaking schools, and mainly as a second language in non-Welsh speaking schools.

## Can **YOU** withdraw your child from the National Curriculum?

There is no parental right to withdraw pupils from National Curriculum subjects, or from the arrangements to assess pupils' progress in these subjects. Parents do, however, have the right to withdraw their children from **Religious Education** and **Sex Education**.

## Do **children** with Special Educational Needs follow the National Curriculum?

Occasionally, a headteacher may excuse a pupil with **Special Educational Needs** from all or part of the National Curriculum on a temporary basis. In exceptional cases some pupils, such as those with Statements of Special Educational Needs issued by the Local Education Authority, may be excused permanently. More information can be found in the Welsh Assembly Government's information booklet for parents and carers, **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales**.

## The National Curriculum Standards to the end of Key Stage 3

Each National Curriculum subject has its own set of challenging targets which cover a series of steps, or levels, on a common national scale. This scale, graded from levels 1 to Exceptional Performance, shows how the subjects become more difficult as children get older, and provides clear goals to aim for. It enables teachers to plan lessons according to age and ability, and helps to measure progress as explained in the following paragraphs.



## How is your child's progress **Assessed** ?

The majority of 14-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 3 are assessed by Teacher Assessment.

### Teacher Assessment

Teachers assess children's work from day to day, in all subjects and activities. In particular, they will assess and record progress in English, Welsh (first or second language), Mathematics, Science, Design and Technology, Information Technology, Geography, History, a Modern Foreign Language, Music, Art and PE.

Taking into account classwork and homework for example, the teacher looks at how the child is doing in the component parts of a subject and decides which level on the National Curriculum scale best suits his or her performance.

## Optional tests / tasks

Task and test materials for English, Welsh (where appropriate), mathematics and science are made available each year for schools to use on an optional basis. The tests and tasks are not externally marked nor are they collected or reported nationally.

It is for each school to decide whether the optional task and test material will be used by their pupils, and, if so, precisely how they are to be used.

Schools are encouraged, although not required, to report the results of these 'optional tests' to parents as part of the annual report of progress.

## What do the results mean ?

The assessment made by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 will provide you with a clear picture of your child's progress against National Curriculum standards. The following table should help you gauge how he or she is doing compared with other children of the same age, both within the school and nationally. However, what is important is that your child is working to his or her full potential. A sample of what is required at each level on the National Curriculum scale can be found on pages 6 and 7 of this booklet.

## Expected Level

The majority of children are expected to achieve Level 5 at the end of key stage 3 but it is important to remember that different children will achieve at different rates. For some children performance below the expected level may be a huge achievement whilst others might be expected to achieve significantly above the expected level.

# Results for 14-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 3

	Teacher Assessment
E	
Level 8	
Level 7	
Level 6	
Level 5	
Level 4	
Level 3	
Level 2	
Level 1	

- Exceptional Performance (E)
- Achieved expected level
- Exceeded expected level
- Working towards expected level

**'Code N'** may be reported where circumstances exist that prevent a school from having sufficient knowledge and evidence on which to base a teacher assessment.

**'Code D'** may be reported where it has been necessary to disapply a pupil from teacher assessment by a pupils statement of Special Educational Needs; or where it is inappropriate to offer the National Curriculum as it currently applies to him or her.

**'Code W'** may be reported where a pupil is currently working towards level one.

## Assessment at the end of Key Stage 4

The subjects which pupils opt to take at ages 14 to 16 can include courses leading to the **General Certificate of Secondary Education** (academic GCSE), which is one of the main methods of assessing the progress of 16-year-olds. Schools may also offer **GCSE Short Courses** which are equivalent to half a full GCSE. GCSE and GCSE Short Courses are graded from A\* to G.

Schools may also offer pupils the opportunity to sit examinations leading to **Entry Level Qualifications**. These qualifications have been developed for pupils who do not achieve level 3 on the National Curriculum scale at the end of Key Stage 3.

An increasing number of schools now offer pupils the opportunity to develop their **Key Skills** and to progress to the actual qualifications. Key Skills are the skills most commonly needed for success in a range of activities at work, in education and training and life in general. There are six Key Skills qualifications, each available at levels 1 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework).

Increasingly schools are offering a wide range of **Vocational Qualifications** to their pupils. These are offered through a variety of awarding bodies and cover many sectors. Your child's school will be able to give you full details of any vocational courses it offers.

The **Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification** is currently being rolled out across Wales. It is offered at Advanced, Intermediate and Foundation levels; pupils in key stage 4 would generally study at Intermediate or Foundation level. It is an over-arching qualification comprising two parts; the Core and Options. The Core is compulsory and consists of four components:

- Key Skills
- Wales, Europe and the World
- Work-related Education
- Personal and Social Education

Students choose their Options from the list of approved external qualifications at the appropriate levels, these might be GCSEs or vocational qualifications as appropriate to the individual learner.

As the variety of different qualifications available to pupils increases it is more complex for parents to gauge what level and volume of learning has been achieved. To help parents and the general public better understand the range of qualifications the Assembly Government has introduced new ways to measure learning achievement.

Each qualification approved for use in Wales has been considered against the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Generally pupils in key stage 4 will study for qualifications at Entry Level, Level 1 or Level 2.

At each NQF level there is a 'threshold' which represents a total volume of learning at or above a specific level, all approved qualifications at the appropriate level contribute to the thresholds.

The **Level 1 Threshold** represents a volume of learning equivalent to 5 GCSEs at Grades D to G.

The **Level 2 Threshold** represents a volume of learning equivalent to 5 GCSEs at Grades A\* to C.

# and beyond

The post-16 curriculum consists of:

- + an Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualification, representing the first half of a full Advanced (A) level;
- + an A level syllabus which offers candidates the choice of linear (end of course) or modular (staged) assessment;
- + Advanced Extension Awards (AEAs) designed to stretch the most able;
- + Applied A levels, including a six unit qualification equivalent in size and demand to a single A level and graded on the same A-E scale and a three unit Applied A level (AS equivalent) available in a limited number of subjects. Applied A levels emphasise student investigative work and assignment writing. They also foster links with employers working as part of a team;
- + key skills qualification to assess students abilities to apply skills in communication, application of number and information technology.

Post 16 pupils may also take a range of vocational qualifications. A levels and many other qualifications taken by post 16 pupils are at Level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework.

The **Level 3 Threshold** represents a volume of learning equivalent to 2 A levels.

Post-16 qualifications are also available to pupils of compulsory school age where schools feel that it is in the pupil's best interest to move on to an advanced level course early.

## A Parent's Guide to the National Curriculum

These pages provide just a sample of what children should be able to do in order to reach each of the levels on the National Curriculum Scale. As a guide, by the end of Key Stage 1, the performance of the majority of pupils should be within the range of Levels 1 to 3, by the end of Key Stage 2 within the range 2 to 5, and by the end of Key Stage 3 within the range 3 to 7. Very able pupils may reach Level 8 or achieve exceptional performance. The scale does not apply at Key Stage 4.

English	Level	Welsh
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Show confident use of standard English in a range of situations, adapting as necessary.</li> <li>+ Writing shows a clear grasp of the use of punctuation and paragraphing.</li> </ul>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Spoken language used is correct and rich.</li> <li>+ Generate writing which displays depth and imagination.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Articulate personal and critical responses to poems, plays and novels, showing awareness of their thematic, structural and linguistic features.</li> <li>+ Show confident use of standard English in situations that require it.</li> </ul>	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Express opinions skilfully on what they read by referring to aspects of language, structure and themes, and analysing them.</li> <li>+ Express opinions, selecting evidence to support their point of view.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Talk engages the interest of the listener on through the variety of its vocabulary and expression.</li> <li>+ Spelling is generally accurate, including that of irregular words. Handwriting is neat and legible.</li> </ul>	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Use research skills to collect relevant information from different sources and summarise effectively.</li> <li>+ A range of punctuation is usually used to clarify meaning, and ideas are organised into paragraphs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Simple and complex sentences are organised into paragraphs.</li> <li>+ A range of punctuation, including commas, apostrophes and inverted commas is usually used accurately.</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Express opinions, giving some reasons in support of their view.</li> <li>+ Write in a clear, varied and interesting manner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Handwriting style is fluent, joined and legible.</li> <li>+ In responding to a range of texts, pupils understanding of significant ideas, themes, events and characters, beginning to use inference and deduction.</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Read clearly and expressively.</li> <li>+ Present work in an organised and sequential manner.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Writing is often organised, imaginative and clear.</li> <li>+ Use their knowledge of the alphabet to locate books and find information.</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Convey simple, personal and factual information clearly.</li> <li>+ Read aloud with growing fluency, accuracy and emphasis.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Express opinions about major events or ideas in stories, poems and non-fiction.</li> <li>+ Ideas are developed in a sequence of sentences, sometimes demarcated by capital letters and full stops.</li> </ul>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Simple words are usually spelt correctly and there is some awareness of basic punctuation, using capital letters and full stops with some degree of consistency.</li> <li>+ Show confidence, particularly when conversing about matters within their experience and interest.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ In their reading or writing, pupils begin to show awareness of how full stops are used.</li> <li>+ Recognise familiar words in simple texts.</li> </ul>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Speak intelligibly and respond appropriately to simple phrases, instructions and questions.</li> <li>+ Communicate by writing words, phrases and the occasional sentence.</li> </ul>

## A Parent's Guide to the National Curriculum

Most children making steady progress will move to a new level on the National Curriculum scale every two years or so. However, achievements will vary according to your child's particular strengths and weaknesses, and some children will climb the levels faster than others. It is unlikely that any child will be at the same level for all subjects, or for the component parts of each subject.

Science	Level	Mathematics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Consider graphs and tables of results critically (and identify shortcomings in the data they have obtained).</li> <li>+ Use scientific knowledge, understanding and skills to select an appropriate strategy, identifying key factors to be considered.</li> </ul>	<b>8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Convey mathematical meaning through consistent use of symbols.</li> <li>+ Solve problems involving calculating with powers, roots and numbers expressed in standard form.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Present data in graphs, where appropriate, and use lines of best fit.</li> <li>+ Explain the difference between elements, compounds and mixtures in terms of their constituent particles.</li> </ul>	<b>7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Understand the effects of multiplying and dividing by numbers between 0 and 1.</li> <li>+ Understanding and apply Pythagoras' theorem when solving problems in two dimensions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Describe differences between the arrangement and movement of particles in solids, liquids and gases.</li> <li>+ Choose scales for graphs that enable them to show appropriate data effectively.</li> </ul>	<b>6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Use formulae to work out the circumferences and areas of circles, areas of rectangles, triangles, etc and volumes of cuboids when solving problems.</li> <li>+ Construct and interpret frequency diagrams.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Describe the main stages of the life cycles of humans and flowering plants, and point out similarities.</li> <li>+ Use models to explain effects that are caused by the movement of the Earth, such as the length of a day or year.</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Solve problems by multiplying and dividing three-digit numbers without using a calculator.</li> <li>+ Understand and draw conclusions about graphs and diagrams, including pie charts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Choose suitable equipment to observe and measure work then present the results using tables and charts.</li> <li>+ Use scientific names for some major organs of a body system, and identify the position of these organs in the human body.</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Multiply and divide whole numbers by 10 or 100.</li> <li>+ Work out: perimeters of simple shapes; areas by counting squares; and volumes by counting cubes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Make relevant observations and measure quantities, such as length or mass, using a range of simple equipment.</li> <li>+ Explain why some materials are particularly suitable for specific purposes, such as copper for making electrical cables.</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Mentally solve multiplication and division problems (including those with remainders) using 2, 5 and 10 times tables.</li> <li>+ Use and interpret mathematical symbols and diagrams.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Know that living things need food, water, air and light to survive, and that different living things are found in different places.</li> <li>+ Describe ways in which some materials are changed by processes such as heating or cooling, or by processes such as bending and stretching.</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Identify and use halves and quarters, such as half of a rectangle or a quarter of eight objects.</li> <li>+ Sort and classify objects in different ways, recording information in simple tables, block graphs and diagrams.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Identify a range of common animals.</li> <li>+ Recognise that sound and light come from a variety of sources and name some of these sources.</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Count, order, add and subtract numbers when solving problems involving up to 10 objects.</li> <li>+ Sort and classify objects, explaining their reasons for doing so.</li> </ul>

# What should your child's report tell you?

As a parent you are entitled to know how your child is doing at school, and each year you should receive a written report on his or her progress and achievements.

Reports for all pupils will include information about:

- + progress in all the National Curriculum subjects which the child is being taught;
- + progress in all other subjects and activities including Religious Education;
- + a record of attendance; and
- + arrangements to discuss your child's report with the teachers.

For pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, reports will include:

- + the Teacher's Assessment of progress throughout the year;
- + comments on strengths and weaknesses;
- + the overall results of pupils of the same age within the school (except in very small schools where 5 or fewer than 5 were assessed); and
- + the national results for the previous year for comparison purposes.

Schools using the 'optional tests' may also choose to include the results in your child's report.

For pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, reports will include:

- + the results of GCSE examinations by subject and grade;
- + any other qualifications or credits gained towards them; and
- + vocational qualifications or units gained towards them.

Reports for school-leavers will be in the form of a **Progress File**.

The table opposite illustrates the subjects which have been assessed, and how the results will be reported.

# Key Stage 3 Reports

Subject	Teacher Assessment		
	Pupil's Results	School Results	National Results*
English	✓	✓	✓
Oracy	✓	✓	x
Reading	✓	✓	x
Writing	✓	✓	x
Welsh (first language)	✓	✓	✓
Oracy	✓	✓	x
Reading	✓	✓	x
Writing	✓	✓	x
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓
Using and Applying Mathematics	✓	✓	x
Number and Algebra	✓	✓	x
Shape, Space and Measures	✓	✓	x
Handling Data	✓	✓	x
Science	✓	✓	✓
Scientific Enquiry	✓	✓	x
Life Processes and Living Things	✓	✓	x
Materials and their Properties	✓	✓	x
Physical Processes	✓	✓	x
Welsh (second language)	✓	✓	✓
Design & Technology	✓	✓	✓
Information Technology	✓	✓	✓
Geography	✓	✓	✓
History	✓	✓	✓
Modern Foreign Language	✓	✓	✓
Art	✓	✓	✓
Music	✓	✓	✓
Physical Education	✓	✓	✓

\* For the previous year  
(for comparative purposes)

## Access to information

Who is entitled to receive reports and other information from the school?

All parents are entitled to receive a copy of the child's report from the school. They are also entitled to receive a copy of the **Governors' Annual Report**, which is produced by the Governing Body at least two weeks before the annual parents' meeting. Divorced or separated parents, and others who may have parental responsibility for a child, are equally entitled to this information, unless there is a court order which would prevent this. Where appropriate, parents are encouraged to pass information on to others who are entitled to receive it, or to inform the school of their whereabouts so that it may be sent to them direct.

### What opportunities do I have to discuss this with the school?

Most schools hold parents' evenings when teachers will be pleased to discuss your child's progress with you. These meetings can be beneficial to both parents and teachers. Your child's report will also include details of how it may be discussed with teachers at the school. The school's Governing Body will hold an annual meeting for parents to discuss the Governors' Annual Report and to share views on how the school is developing. All parents of pupils at the school are entitled to attend this meeting and are encouraged to do so.

### Where can I find out about school results?

The school's results will be reported in your child's report. They are also published annually in the **School Prospectus** as well as the **Governors' Annual Report**. If you wish to find the results of other primary or secondary schools you should contact the school and ask for a copy of their prospectus, which will be available free of charge. This will set out the results in a wider context alongside details of the school's curriculum and how this is organised and taught, as well as providing a background of the school's ethos and values. If you are unsure of the schools in your area, or would like to find out about schools in another area of Wales, you should contact the **Local Education Authority** (LEA) who will provide you with a copy of their composite prospectus. This will contain a list of all the LEA-maintained schools in the area and their contact details, as well as the admissions policy for each school. Copies of the composite prospectus should also be available at libraries within the LEA area.

You can also download a summary of performance for any school in Wales from the National Pupil Database at:

[www.npd-wales.gov.uk](http://www.npd-wales.gov.uk)

### Where can I find copies of other school documents?

Parents can ask to see copies of the National Curriculum documents and the Religious Education syllabus held at the school. Copies of current schemes of work and other syllabuses should be available, and the arrangements for parents to view any of these documents should be set out in the School Prospectus. Copies of the National Curriculum documents should also be available in public libraries, to buy from bookshops that sell The Stationery Office publications, or on the internet at:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills>

