

Designing and timetabling the primary curriculum

*The National
Literacy and
Numeracy
Strategies*

A practical guide for key
stages 1 and 2

How to use this guide

Schools wishing to carry out a complete review of their curriculum and timetabling could work through the guide section-by-section, using the questions as starting points for discussion. Alternatively, if a school simply wanted to consider particular issues, for example its curriculum priorities or lesson lengths, the staff could consult the relevant section to see an outline of the issue and examples of the different solutions various schools have adopted.

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Foreword

Over recent years, primary schools have placed an increasing emphasis on systematic, high quality curriculum planning. This guidance from QCA has been informed by the excellent work undertaken in many schools. It puts forward an approach to designing and timetabling the curriculum that has the support of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy.

The national curriculum and religious education provide the basic building blocks for constructing the school curriculum. In addition, there is considerable flexibility available to schools to enable them to fashion their own curriculum. Effective schools take these components as their starting point in designing and timetabling a curriculum that reflects their values, aims and aspirations, and is right for their children and the communities they serve.



Sir William Stubbs
Chairman
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Introduction

This guidance is intended mainly for headteachers, senior managers, teachers and school governors, although others with an interest in education may find it useful.

While this booklet focuses on key stages 1 and 2, many of the issues it explores are relevant to the foundation stage. In making decisions about the key stage 1 curriculum, schools should take account of the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

This guide is in four sections and has three appendices.

Section 1 sets out what the law requires and the flexibility that schools have in designing and timetabling their curriculum. It gives an overview of the main considerations for schools if they are to ensure that all their children experience a vibrant, purposeful and challenging curriculum. There is no single right solution that will suit all schools. Each school needs to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of different possible solutions and come to a judgement about what works best for them in their particular circumstances.

The issues sketched out in Section 1 are considered in more detail in **Sections 2 and 3**. The examples included throughout these sections show a variety of solutions that individual schools have adopted. It is hoped that these examples will help schools to reflect on their own approaches to designing and timetabling the curriculum.

Section 4 comprises case studies of three different schools, illustrating the ways in which they have designed the curriculum in the light of their vision and circumstances. Each school expects that their curriculum will continue to develop over time and may require some revisiting of previous decisions as circumstances change.

The three appendices suggest starting points for allocating time to subjects, provide examples of daily timetables and list sources of further information.

1. Making the most of the flexibility in the curriculum

What the law requires

All maintained schools are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children which:

- promotes their spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development;
- prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Schools have to teach the national curriculum and religious education. The challenge for each school is to customise this basic entitlement to learning and, in the context of Government policies and initiatives, create its own distinctive and unique curriculum.

The curriculum for key stages 1 and 2 must include the following national curriculum subjects as specified in their programmes of study.

English	geography
mathematics	history
science	information & communication technology (ICT)
art and design	music
design and technology (D&T)	physical education (PE)

The other statutory requirements are:

- religious education (RE);
- a daily act of collective worship.

There are no nationally specified programmes of study for religious education, but schools, other than voluntary-aided or faith schools, must teach religious education according to the locally agreed syllabus.

Sources of guidance on statutory requirements and organising and teaching the curriculum are listed in Appendix 3.



The flexibility for schools

All schools have considerable freedom to determine the character and distinctive nature of their curriculum. Increasingly, primary schools are showing innovative and creative ways of using this flexibility.

Designing the curriculum

A school can consider and decide for itself all of the following:

- **values and aims** – how will these inform decisions about the curriculum?
- **curriculum priorities and emphases** – what are the school's main priorities? How much importance should be given to each subject and which aspects within them should be emphasised?
- **adding to the national curriculum** – what might need to be added to the statutory curriculum for a school to meet its aims?
- **organising and labelling the curriculum** – which subjects or aspects within subjects will be taught separately, and which will be combined with other subjects? What opportunities are there to apply and develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum?
- **distributing the curriculum across the key stage** – when will subjects, units of work or topics be taught: daily, weekly, half-termly, termly?
- **curriculum inclusion and differentiation** – how will the curriculum be adapted for children with different abilities and needs?
- **curriculum continuity** – how can the design of the curriculum help children to make a smooth transfer from one key stage to the next?

Timetabling the curriculum

Depending on its circumstances, a school may be able to decide on some or all of the following:

- **the number of terms in the school year** – what are the advantages and disadvantages of changing the number of terms? Is change feasible?
- **the number of teaching hours in the week** – what changes might be made to weekly teaching hours? How might the start and finish times of the day, and break and lunchtimes be changed?
- **lesson length** – how long should lessons be? How far will this vary according to the age of the children, the content of the lesson and the type of activity?
- **the time allocated to each subject** – how much time will each subject receive and why?
- **the timetable** – what is the best way of timetabling literacy and mathematics? How much variety is there in the morning session? What is the pattern of activities across the week?
- **the grouping of children** – are children grouped in particular ways for particular subjects or activities, for example by ability or gender?
- **the organisation of additional support for literacy and mathematics** – what are the most effective ways to timetable these lessons?
- **the effective use of resources** – how can timetabling maximise the use of resources?

The next two sections of this guide look at each of the issues in turn and show how schools are making the most of the flexibility in the curriculum.

2. Designing the curriculum

What kind of school are we?

What are our values and aims?

How do these affect our decisions about the curriculum?



Examples

Values and aims

Primary schools share many values, such as appreciating the unique qualities of each individual and valuing honesty and tolerance. They also hold some common aims. For example, they may aim to provide a safe, caring, stimulating and enjoyable learning environment, to maximise the attainment of all children and to promote high standards. *The National Curriculum: Handbook for primary teachers in England*, pages 10 to 13, sets out values and aims for the school curriculum. Individual schools can build on these while taking into account their own distinctive character and ethos. Schools will want to find their own ways of translating their values and aims into practice.

What kind of school are we?

- ‘Broadening horizons’ is a fundamental aim of a small primary school in a remote rural area. Children are taught about other cultures, both within Britain and abroad, as they have little contact with other communities. The school prioritises aspects of work in RE and geography which provide opportunities for other cultures and localities to be studied. For example, the children visit a mosque in the nearest large city and communicate by e-mail with children at a school that has a largely Muslim intake. The children increase their knowledge and understanding of Islam and also extend their experience of a contrasting culture and environment, as the partner school is in a busy urban area.
- One primary school focuses on promoting individual rights and responsibilities. It values the feelings, interests and views of all members of the school community, and supports an ethos of openness between staff and pupils. As part of personal, social and health education (PSHE), teachers discuss rights and responsibilities with their classes. These are then shared and agreed through whole school assemblies. Children also have opportunities to become involved in decision-making through class councils and a school council. The school has developed its own units of work in citizenship, building on its values, for example in year 1, ‘My family and friends’ explores issues to do with behaviour and rules.
- Promoting children’s creativity is a key aim of another primary school. Children are encouraged to explore and develop their ideas and to look for innovative solutions to problems in all subjects. Each year, all classes work on a large-scale, collaborative project linking two or three subjects. These may vary from year to year. Each project leads to a week of performances, special activities and interactive exhibitions.

What kinds of learning are important for our children?

Which subjects are a priority for our school?

How might we give particular emphasis to aspects within subjects?



- Another school focuses on innovative ways of learning through the use of ICT because it believes that these skills are essential to children's lives now and in the future. Its decisions about resourcing, curriculum planning and teaching and learning reflect this commitment. For example, each classroom has an interactive whiteboard that teachers use across the curriculum, and which children also use in making presentations to the rest of the class.

Deciding priorities for the curriculum

Schools are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and to teach the programmes of study in each national curriculum subject. English and mathematics are a priority at key stages 1 and 2 as children need to become secure and confident learners in these subjects if they are to make good progress in their education. At the same time, rich and varied activities and experiences in the rest of the curriculum are also crucial to children's motivation and progress. Schools need to take into account the interdependence of English and mathematics and the other subjects when making decisions about their priorities, and as they decide on time allocations. Beyond these considerations, however, schools have the flexibility to decide how much importance they give to each subject and which aspects they emphasise within subjects. Such decisions might apply across a key stage, to particular year groups or other groupings of children, as well as to individuals.

What kinds of learning are important for our children?

- A school striving to raise attainment prioritises English and mathematics while continuing to offer a broad and balanced curriculum. It provides a variety of opportunities for children to apply and develop their literacy and mathematical skills across the curriculum, particularly through history and design and technology. Projects and visits relating to these subjects motivate the children, and are helping them to make faster progress in the core curriculum.
- A school prioritises science, particularly scientific enquiry, because it believes that this aspect of the subject promotes essential skills needed for learning across the curriculum. Skills including analysis, observation, critical questioning, comparing and predicting are emphasised where appropriate, in all schemes of work. The school feels that as a result of this focus, children are becoming more confident in contexts that involve discussion, for example group work in PSHE and citizenship and role-play activities in drama. Children's performances in aspects of history and geography have also benefited from the emphasis on these skills.
- One school prioritises physical education because most of its children live in blocks of flats and have limited opportunities to become involved in sport or outdoor play beyond school. Although some children go to

the local park, it is more than half a mile away from the school and involves crossing several busy roads. The school believes that children's concentration and energy-levels improve when they are taking more exercise, so in addition to their one and a half hours of timetabled PE per week, all children follow a 'Fit For Learning' programme. This involves two 15-minute sessions of specially designed exercises each week that take place during break and lunchtime.

Do we want to add to the national curriculum? If so, what and when?

What might we add to the national curriculum, to help us meet our aims?

Do we want to enhance experiences in the national curriculum subjects? If so, which subjects, why and when?

Do we want to add a subject to the curriculum? If so, which subject, why and when?

Do we want to provide additional clubs and activities? If so, why and when?

Adding to the national curriculum

Primary schools usually go beyond statutory requirements and add to the curriculum. They make use of the flexibilities available to them to enhance their curriculum, and in some cases to extend the school day itself. They can decide the scope and nature of any additions, and whether they will apply to a key stage, to particular year groups or to other groupings of children.

Adding to the curriculum can be an effective way of translating a school's aims into practice, and can provide children with new experiences and ways of working. Schools may provide:

- additional opportunities and experiences that enhance learning in national curriculum subjects, for example, visits to theatres, museums and galleries, residential trips, inter-school sports competitions and opportunities to work with local writers and artists;
- additional subjects or aspects of subjects, such as a modern foreign language, PSHE and citizenship;
- clubs and activities based on interest and need, such as chess, cookery, ICT, French conversation, sports and homework clubs, usually held before school, in the lunch break or after school.

Each school makes its own decisions about whether such provision happens within or outside taught time, bearing in mind that activities provided outside taught time are voluntary, and participation in them may be affected by factors such as the availability of transport.



Examples

What do we want to add to the curriculum within taught time?

- In one school, French is taught for ten minutes each day at key stage 2. The children learn basic conversational French mainly through games and there is an annual 'French Day' when children prepare French food that is then served in a special café set up in the school hall. On the day, the children are encouraged to speak only in French. The teachers feel that this addition to the curriculum not only gives children a basic knowledge of another language, but also has a positive impact on their overall linguistic competence. For example, some children have made

links between aspects of French and English during word level work within the literacy hour. They have also extended their awareness of French culture.

- In a town twinned with another in Germany, a primary school has introduced German lessons for all children in years 5 and 6, for approximately 45 minutes a week. There are regular video-conferencing links that not only focus on oral skills, but also allow the children to learn about aspects of life in the other country. The children also exchange e-mails, which is proving to be a particularly effective way for them to develop their vocabulary.
- A junior school believes in involving children in decision-making about the day-to-day running of the school. Children have a key role in drawing up and reviewing the school's list of agreed 'Rules and Responsibilities', as well as discussing a range of issues in the newly formed school council. These activities are part of the school's programme for PSHE and citizenship, and are allocated time within the school day. Although teachers considered running the school council in after-school sessions, they felt that this would work against their belief that all children should take part. The school also wanted children to see the council as an important part of the curriculum, and placing it within taught time reinforced this message.
- To support its aim of enhancing children's thinking skills, a primary school teaches weekly philosophy lessons from year 2. These sessions are timetabled as 'Thinking circles' and run for between 30 to 50 minutes, depending on the year group. A range of resources, including non-fiction texts, stories, picture books and poetry are taken as the starting points for the lessons, and are proving successful in stimulating children's interest and developing their ability to engage with complex issues. Teachers feel that children's questioning and reasoning skills, and their speaking and listening, have improved across the curriculum.
- A middle school has well-established links with an outdoor study and activity centre in a neighbouring county. Children in year 6 spend three days at the centre in the summer term, focusing on geography. They use the centre's trails and natural features to apply some of their mapping skills, and also carry out a study of the local area, which is very different to the urban location of their school. In addition, the children gain experience of working in different groups with children from other classes and of cooperating to organise and tidy their dormitories. The school feels that this experience helps the children to develop greater confidence, independence and maturity. In year 7, the children return to the centre for five days and focus mainly on science and art and design. The school plans these trips during taught time because it believes that they enhance both children's subject knowledge and their personal development.



Examples

What do we want to add to the curriculum outside taught time?

- One school is part of a 'Football in the community' scheme run by the local football club. Children have the opportunity to develop their skills while working alongside professional players. Both girls and boys take part in the sessions, which take place after school during the autumn and spring terms. The school has found that the scheme is having an impact on its games lessons in PE, as children are eager to share the skills and strategies they have learned.
- One of the priorities of a large primary school is to promote children's overall health and fitness. In addition to the one and a half hours of timetabled PE each week, after-school sports activities are organised for four days each week. These activities vary each term and include basketball, athletics and rounders clubs, as well as some activities for specific year groups or single-sex groups. The clubs are well attended. They help to maintain children's fitness, boost their self-confidence and encourage their interest in a wide range of sports. They also involve most children in two hours or more of physical activity at school each week.
- Another school uses teachers and a parent with particular expertise in ICT to provide after-school activities. These include a Cyber Club, a Maths Masterclass and a Performing Arts Club. The school feels that it is meeting a variety of interests and providing opportunities for children to be challenged and to enjoy themselves. Ideas for classes often come from the children or from parents and, after several requests, the school recently began a Homework Club. Children in years 5 and 6 can use the library after school from Monday to Thursday to complete their homework and to seek help. The club is staffed by year 5 and 6 teachers on a rota basis.
- A Young Engineers Club has been set up in another school. Children have worked on design and technology projects stimulated by contact with local businesses. One project arose from a visit to a company that manufactures packaging. The challenge of designing and making durable but lightweight packaging was one that the children could understand and attempt at the club. The school's links with the manufacturers helped to make the project a success, and the children were able to present their ideas to groups of workers from the company.
- One junior school raises funds to pay for specialist music teachers so that all children who are interested in learning to play a musical instrument can do so. It plans a variety of musical events and projects to help raise funds, including highly popular karaoke evenings involving children, parents and staff. The music classes are organised before school three times a week. This arrangement works well because the majority of children at the school live nearby and can come to school earlier without difficulty. The children involved in the classes give a concert for the school and local community once a year.

How do we organise and label the curriculum?

Which subjects do we teach separately, and why?

Which aspects of subjects do we combine, and why?

How do we label lessons? Do we want to do this differently, and why?

Organising and labelling the curriculum

The national curriculum is specified as separate subjects but schools are not required to teach the subjects separately. However, because children's progress in literacy and mathematics is essential to their progress across the curriculum, these two subjects are best taught separately, with opportunities for children to apply their literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects.

Each school is free to decide how the curriculum is organised and taught. *The National Curriculum: Handbook for primary teachers in England* shows how the programmes of study for each subject build on learning in other subjects. This information can support schools in organising and sequencing the curriculum. The coherence of the curriculum can be strengthened by combining aspects of one subject with those of another. Through their planning, schools may combine related or complementary aspects of the programmes of study from two or three subjects to plan a single unit of work or topic. Learning objectives for each individual subject continue to be covered over the course of this sequence of work.

Schools will also want to plan opportunities for children to make connections between subjects by applying their skills, knowledge and understanding in one subject to their work in another. For example, previous work on constructing electrical circuits in science can be developed in a real-life context as part of a design and technology assignment to design and make a burglar alarm.

If schools take up these different approaches to organising aspects of subjects, they need to make sure, through their key stage plans and schemes of work, that children's progress in all subjects is secure, and that the programmes of study for all subjects are covered in full across the relevant key stage.



Examples

How do we organise and label the curriculum?

- A Beacon primary school believes strongly in making links between subjects where they deal with related skills and knowledge or when children can reinforce their learning by applying it in a different context. Subject leaders have worked together to organise aspects of the programmes of study for different subjects into blocks of work. They considered how coverage and progression could be built into each key stage, and which aspects of each programme of study would need to be taught separately. They then planned units of work that package together some aspects of art and design, dance, drama and music as 'the arts', and some aspects of science, design and technology and ICT as 'science and technology'. In addition, some aspects of history, geography and PSHE have been brought together as topics. English, mathematics, PE and RE are always taught as separate subjects, but explicit links are made with the blocks of work in other subjects so that children's skills, knowledge and understanding can be applied in a range of contexts. The school feels that this dual approach ensures that children have a rich and varied learning experience, and are able to make connections across subjects.

- When a junior school heard of plans to build houses on nearby heathland, its year 5 teachers decided to use the issue as the focus for a project. The school regularly used the heath for work in science and for observational drawing in art and design, so the issue was interesting and relevant to the children. Aspects of geography (environmental change and sustainable development) were taught with aspects of science (living things in their environment) in a sequence of lessons across half a term. The teachers made some changes to their yearly plan because they had originally planned to teach those parts of the geography and science programmes of study separately, during different terms. The children drew on their knowledge and understanding of both subjects, and their work in the literacy hour on presenting an argument, to write letters to the council suggesting ways that the building programme could be modified.
- For its year 3 children, a first school linked work in art and design with work in design and technology and developed a project called ‘The Puppet Show’, bringing together aspects of both programmes of study. The project was taught over half a term and built on previous terms’ plans for each subject. There were many opportunities for children to apply their mathematical and language skills during the project. They used a variety of materials and processes, as well as skills in measuring, marking out, cutting and shaping materials, to make puppets of particular story characters. In the literacy hour, the children wrote simple playscripts that they then used to present a show for the reception class.

How might we arrange the curriculum across each key stage?

How frequently do we want to teach each subject? Daily? Weekly? Every half term? Every term?

Distributing the curriculum across each key stage

Having organised the curriculum, schools decide how it will be distributed across each key stage. Some subjects need to be taught regularly. For example, English and mathematics are best taught daily so that children’s progress in these subjects is continuous and sustained across the key stages. PE needs to be taught each week to develop children’s physical skills and promote their fitness and health.

Other subjects do not necessarily have to be taught every week, every half term or even every term. For example, a subject might be taught in every other term across key stage 2. Teaching a subject across six terms instead of twelve could result in longer lessons, and could also help sustain children’s interest and enable them to achieve more in a single lesson. In addition, it might help to reduce the amount of planning required, as teachers would not have to plan every subject every term.



Examples

How might we arrange the curriculum across each key stage?

- A primary school suspends the year 4 timetable for three complete days in the spring term for a design and technology assignment on bread-making. It includes a visit to a local bakery and practical activities such as conducting tests to find the ideal conditions for growing yeast. The children also design packaging for their bread, developing their own unique brand, using computers and graphics programs. The project builds up to a 'Bread Around the World' festival when the children present their finished bread to the bakery. Children's work across the three days touches upon many subjects, and the teachers feel that the project is an effective way for them to teach key parts of the design and technology programme of study.
- A junior school teaches English and mathematics daily, and science, ICT, music, PE and religious education weekly across the key stage. History, geography, design and technology and art and design are taught every other half term. Geography alternates with history and design and technology alternates with art and design. These four subjects are taught as longer lessons because they are not taught every week.
- A primary school that teaches music for 30 minutes each week throughout year 6 provides more concentrated music teaching towards the end of the summer term. There are two short music lessons each week and four complete afternoons of music towards the end of term, culminating in a class performance for parents. The school feels that this is an effective way of motivating children, as they have found that some children seem to lose energy and enthusiasm after their key stage 2 tests.
- In a middle school that emphasises the development of children's fieldwork techniques, geography has more lesson time at the beginning of the autumn term and in the summer term, when the weather is more likely to permit field trips. History has more lesson time in the remainder of the year to fit in with this pattern. Both subjects are given the same total time each year. The school tries to make sure that children have opportunities to consolidate their skills in both subjects throughout the year, to promote continuity in their learning.

How do we adapt the curriculum to meet different needs?

How can we adapt the curriculum for children who are working below expected levels?

How can we adapt the curriculum for the most able children?

Inclusion and differentiation

The statutory inclusion statement in *The National Curriculum: Handbook for primary teachers in England* (pages 30–37) describes how all children can be provided with relevant learning experiences and suitably challenging work. When planning, teachers should set high expectations and provide opportunities for all children to achieve, including boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups including travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

While schools must aim to cover the age-related programmes of study for each subject, they can decide on adaptations to the curriculum in order to meet particular needs and abilities. They may do this through differentiation and through special timetabling arrangements. If children do not follow the normal timetable for the class, for example when they are withdrawn for additional support in literacy or mathematics, specialist instrumental tuition or for additional or different interventions through School Action or School Action Plus, schools need to ensure that they do not consistently miss out on one part of the curriculum. It is important that all children continue to receive a broad and balanced curriculum.

The needs of children who are achieving below expected levels could be met through work that draws on an earlier stage. For key stage 1 children, this may mean selecting aspects from the foundation stage curriculum, and for key stage 2 children, aspects of the key stage 1 programmes of study. Alternatively, teachers may continue to teach from the age-related programmes of study, emphasising particularly important aspects and reinforcing these at a pace appropriate for the individual. They might also organise additional support or intervention programmes for these children.

For the most able children, increasing the pace of learning can prove challenging and motivating. While still teaching from the age-related programmes of study, teachers can extend the breadth and depth of children's learning by providing a wider variety of opportunities. For example, they could focus on developing higher order skills and promoting greater independence and reflection. Schools can also plan for children to complete a key stage programme of study early and to progress beyond its requirements into the next key stage.



Examples

How do we adapt the curriculum to meet different needs?

- A school has a specialist unit for children with language and communication difficulties. It aims to balance children's needs for additional support against their entitlement to a broad curriculum. Teachers plan jointly with the speech and language therapist and try to ensure that the children have their therapy sessions during subjects that are taught regularly. This means that children don't miss out on one

particular subject and can maintain progress. The therapist is also present to help the children in their other lessons on several occasions during the week.

- Having identified boys' performance in reading as an issue, a junior school has organised weekly lessons for single-sex groups, taught by an advanced skills teacher from a nearby secondary school. He focuses on teaching literature to children in years 5 and 6. The school finds that both boys and girls are taking an interest in a broader range of literature as a result of this approach.
- One school uses specialist teachers to support children who are learning English as an additional language. These teachers plan alongside the class teacher and adapt lessons and resources so that EAL children can learn in ways that support their language development, for example, through additional opportunities to discuss idiomatic language.
- In a primary school, the more able children in years 1 and 2 join a 'mathematics challenge group' that replaces one daily mathematics lesson and a 'literacy extension group' replacing one of the daily literacy hours. This differentiation allows the school to accelerate and extend children's learning within each subject. At key stage 2, as well as providing for gifted and talented children through timetabled lessons, the more able are offered alternative homework and extension activities. These include more challenging problem-solving tasks.

How can we link children's learning across phases and key stages?

How can we link the foundation stage with the key stage 1 curriculum?

What can we do to promote links between learning in year 2 and year 3?

How can we link key stage 2 with key stage 3?

Curriculum continuity and children's learning

Children of all abilities can falter in their learning when they move from one phase of education to the next, or between key stages. They may be faced with an unfamiliar environment and new styles of teaching and learning. Schools can support continuity and progression across these stages through their curriculum planning and timetabling arrangements.

For example, many schools support the transition from the foundation stage into key stage 1 by gradually establishing more formal timetables and routines and through some joint planning by reception and year 1 teachers. The primary to secondary transition, from a single familiar class teacher to numerous new teachers for different subjects, is particularly difficult for some children. Effective primary schools attach great importance to preparing children for the transition. They work with their partner secondary schools in a variety of ways to help children settle down quickly in their new environment and make a confident start to the key stage 3 curriculum.



Examples

How can we link children's learning across phases and key stages?

Building on the foundation stage

- Year 1 and reception teachers in an infant school work together to plan the last half term of reception and the first half term of year 1. They focus on ensuring continuity in children's learning by planning topics together and introducing reception children to some of the routines of the year 1 class. Some topics are also linked between the years, so that the children can be encouraged to remember and build on their learning in the foundation stage.

Building on key stage 1

- In a primary school, the classrooms for year 2 and year 3 children are next to each other so that it is easier to combine the two year groups for some activities, for example class assemblies, outdoor games, and dance. Another benefit of this arrangement is that the teachers are better able to work together and broaden their experience of different age ranges. In the summer term, the year 2 children join the juniors at break and lunchtime.
- Neighbouring infant and junior schools meet regularly to work together on their whole-school policies and schemes of work so that the distribution of the curriculum in year 3 takes into account the structure and content of coverage during key stage 1, and specifically during year 2. This means that the year 3 teachers can build on topics and themes that the children have already studied. In addition, the special educational needs coordinators meet during the summer term so that key information about children who received additional support in year 2 can be passed on. This helps to prevent any dip in the children's confidence and learning when they transfer to the junior school.

Building on key stage 2

- One junior school arranges for teachers from the neighbouring secondary school to teach weekly mathematics and English lessons to year 6 children in the second half of the summer term. The lessons are based on the year 6 objectives, but the secondary teachers also make links to work that the children will meet in year 7. The children become familiar with some aspects of the next key stage and have the opportunity to ask questions about secondary school.
- A group of primary schools work with two local secondary schools to provide a bridging course in mathematics. The transition unit focuses on calculation and problem solving, and draws on both the key stage 2 and key stage 3 teaching frameworks for mathematics. Five lessons are taught in the primary school, and five in the secondary school. All the schools feel that this arrangement has improved continuity in children's learning and increased their confidence at the beginning of year 7.

3. Timetabling the curriculum

Before constructing a timetable, a school will have made decisions about the total time available for teaching – the number of weeks in the year and the length of the school day. Constraints will be taken into account, particularly the number and availability of staff, as well as accommodation. In addition, parents will have views about the time of day that schools should start and finish, and about the length of the school day. Local circumstances such as bus timetables and travelling times could also affect these decisions.

Nonetheless, schools have room for manoeuvre. This section considers the scope for variation, and looks at how the total teaching time might be adjusted and the different ways in which time can be allocated.

The number of terms

Decisions on the number of terms are taken locally. For most schools, the local education authority (LEA) determines the dates of school terms. Schools that wish to vary the dates need to do so by agreement with the LEA.

Foundation and voluntary-aided schools are able to set their own dates. But any school taking a fresh look at the dates of its terms will be influenced by the benefits, especially for parents, of all local schools using the same dates.

A Local Government Association commission on the organisation of the school year (see Appendix 3) reported that there had been a warm response to its proposal for a six-term year. However, there are other possible options for LEAs and schools to consider if they wish.

Do we want to change the structure of our school year?

What might we gain by changing the number of terms in the year?

Is it feasible for us to make changes?



Example

A school with a five-term year

- A primary school has five terms of between seven and eight weeks each. There are four term breaks of approximately two weeks each and a summer holiday of four weeks. The school finds that there are both advantages and disadvantages to this structuring of the year.

Shorter terms that are roughly equal in length have helped to make planning more manageable, and also seem to increase the pace of children's learning. Teachers and children find that their enthusiasm and energy levels are higher during term-time because no single term is too long, and because they have two-week breaks across the year. Children appear to forget less of what they learnt the previous term during the shorter summer holiday, and family holidays can be taken at quieter and cheaper times of the year.

However the school's holidays do not always coincide with the national Easter holiday or parents' holidays. Differences in the holiday dates of sisters and brothers at other schools or colleges can also make it hard to plan family breaks. These issues affect staff as well as pupils.

Do we want to change our teaching hours?

What are our daily and weekly teaching hours?

What changes might we make to the start and finish times of the school day?

How might we change break and lunch times?

Is it feasible for us to make these changes?



Teaching hours

DES Circular 7/90 recommends a minimum of 21 hours of teaching time each week for children in key stage 1 and a minimum of 23½ hours of teaching time each week for children in key stage 2, exclusive of registration, collective worship, breaks and lunch.

Most schools start their day between 8:30am and 9:00am and finish between 3:15pm and 3:45pm. Schools that want to change their start and finish times may do so at the beginning of an academic year. They must consult parents and give them and the LEA at least three months' notice of the change. Small adjustments to timings within each day can make a big difference to the total teaching time over the key stage, and consequently to the curriculum a school is able to offer. For example, more teaching time can be created by adjusting the times for breaks, lunch and activities other than lessons, such as registration.

The length of each day need not be the same, although the number of teaching hours in a week will be the same across the year. For example, a school could have an extra lesson for particular year groups on some days of the week.

How many teaching hours in our week?

- Two junior schools both have a school day running from 8:50am to 3:10pm. Within this time, one school provides 4 hours 40 minutes of teaching each day, while the other provides 4 hours 55 minutes. The difference of 1 hour 15 minutes a week allows the second school to give more time to the arts.
- A junior school that wanted to provide specific planning time for teachers each week consulted parents on changing to a shorter school day on Fridays. The majority of parents and pupils were in favour of a 9:00am to 2:30pm timetable on Fridays, with the existing 9:00am to 3:15pm school day running for the rest of the week. By setting an earlier and shorter lunchtime and missing out the morning break, the school continues to meet the recommendation for 23½ hours of taught time per week, and teachers have welcomed the dedicated time for meeting with colleagues. The non-teaching deputy headteacher is free during this meeting time and supervises any children who may not have been collected at 2:30.
- A middle school's day runs from 8:50am to 3:35pm, with a total teaching time of 25 hours each week. This provides considerably more time each year than the DfES suggested minimum for years 5 and 6 children. This time is used for weekly lessons in French, drama and PSHE and citizenship.

How long should each lesson be?

What range of lesson lengths do we use, and why?

When might we need longer/shorter lessons?

What are the longest and shortest lesson lengths we might use?

Lesson length

Schools are free to decide the length of each lesson. Lesson lengths often vary between key stages, but there are also differences between schools.

When making decisions about the length of lessons for literacy and mathematics, many schools use the times in the teaching frameworks to guide them. Teachers are familiar with the demands of other subjects and will know that the optimum lesson length may vary from subject to subject. Subjects that involve practical work may sometimes need extended periods of time if children are to achieve something worthwhile in each lesson. For example, in design and technology, children need time to get out and tidy away equipment. In PE, children may need time to set up and put away apparatus, as well as time to change their clothes. For some activities, for example those involving sustained writing, children may need to concentrate without interruption if they are to complete a piece of work within the lesson.

Decisions about lesson length are made alongside decisions about the structure of the school day and the timing of breaks and lunch.

Examples of teaching hours and lesson lengths in different schools				
	KEY STAGE 1		KEY STAGE 2	
	weekly teaching time (hrs:mins)	range of lesson lengths (mins)	weekly teaching time (hrs:mins)	range of lesson lengths (mins)
An infant school	22:00	20, 30, 60, 70		
A junior school			25:00	60
A primary school	21:15	25, 30, 45, 60	23:40	20, 25, 40, 55, 60
A primary school	21:15	30, 40, 45, 60	23:45	30, 50, 60, 75
A middle school			25:00	50

A range of daily timetables showing different lesson lengths and approaches to structuring the school day is included in Appendix 2.

Subject time allocations

Good teaching and learning depend on sensible time allocations and the effective use of time. Too much time may produce too leisurely a pace of learning; too little time will make it impossible for a teacher to cover the programme of study. Different subjects require different amounts of time.

There are no statutory time allocations for national curriculum subjects. However, the national strategies for literacy and numeracy prescribe a daily amount of time for literacy and mathematics. It is up to each school to determine the amount of time needed for its children to cover the programmes of study successfully in all subjects. The challenge for each school is to decide how to give enough teaching time to the core subjects, while at the same time ensuring that children study a broad and balanced curriculum, in sufficient depth and to the expected standard.

How much time should we give to different subjects?

How much time do we need to add to English and mathematics?

Which other subjects need additional time?

How much time can we add to other subjects?

If exact time allocations were specified, it would prevent schools from customising the curriculum to support their values and aims and to meet children's needs. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify starting points for deciding the teaching time needed to produce a broad and balanced curriculum for every child. These are described in Appendix 1. Pupils should be entitled to at least these amounts of teaching time in each subject.

The times suggested leave approximately 15 per cent of total teaching time for the school to allocate according to its judgement of what is best for its children: increasing the time for all subjects or for priority subjects, or adding to the national curriculum. In practice, all schools will have designed their curriculum and timetable around a set of time allocations based on their priorities. Because it does not cover the full programmes of study for English, many schools will have increased the times for English beyond those set out in the teaching framework.

Deciding on time allocations or calculating existing times is relatively straightforward for subjects that are taught separately each week. When this is not the case, for example when aspects of two subjects are planned as a topic or when subjects are taught every other half term, time allocations can be more difficult to determine. The amount of time required for on-going activities, units of work or topics needs to be assessed during the planning process, so that judgements about overall time allocations across a key stage can be made.

Time allocations for subjects show the intended balance in the school curriculum, and there should be a reasonably close match between these figures and the timetable and lesson plans. The following examples show how schools have allocated time (beyond the suggested starting points in Appendix 1) to match their priorities, while still meeting the requirement to teach the programmes of study for each subject.



How much time should we give to different subjects?

- A primary school with a high proportion of EAL learners has decided to devote eight and a half hours a week to literacy. While teachers plan opportunities for literacy skills to be applied across children's learning in other subjects, the school has had to reconsider the way time is allocated to different subjects. As design and technology and geography had been given slightly greater emphasis in previous years through large-scale project work, the school has reduced the time allocated to these subjects while continuing to cover their programmes of study. The situation will be reviewed annually, and allocations for other subjects may be adjusted so that the school can continue to focus on literacy without affecting the overall balance of the curriculum.
- In a junior school, ICT is timetabled for one hour 45 minutes per week in years 3 and 4, as the school believes it is important for children's ICT skills to be developed and consolidated early on in the key stage. Some of

this additional time focuses on using ICT in other subjects, and teachers feel that children's learning across the curriculum is enhanced as a result. ICT is then taught for one hour a week in years 5 and 6, as the school increases its focus on the core subjects during these years.

- One middle school devotes four hours a week to science because it believes that science promotes fundamentally important skills that support children's learning across the curriculum. For example, thinking skills such as enquiry, reasoning and evaluation are important aspects of science and can be used in many other areas of the children's work. This prioritising still allows the school to cover the programmes of study for other subjects.

What goes where in the timetable?

How can we provide a variety of activities across each day and each week?

How many lessons should we timetable each day?

When should we teach the literacy hour and mathematics lesson?

How can we timetable shared resources efficiently?

Drawing up a timetable

Having established the amount of taught time, the length of each school day and the length of different lessons, which may vary from day to day, schools need to decide when each subject or topic is taught.

The type and sequence of lessons across the school day and week need to be planned so that children's interest and motivation is sustained. For example, there should be a balance between activities with a practical or physical element and those that are mainly pencil-and-paper based. In addition, the balance between activities that children do as part of a whole class, a group or individually should be considered within lessons and across the day.

Timetabling also needs to take into account the time of day at which particular subjects are taught. For example, some schools teach both literacy and mathematics lessons in the morning session from year 1 through to year 6. They feel that this pattern gives a clear focus to the morning's timetable, and helps children become accustomed to particular routines. However, it can mean that shared resources, such as the hall or an ICT suite, are not always used effectively and that there is less flexibility for employing part time staff.

Children might make judgements about a subject's status based on when it is taught, for example if it is always taught at the beginning or end of the day or at the end of the week.

More and more schools are timetabling three lessons in the morning session to give them more flexibility in deciding when subjects are taught and to enable them to use the mornings more productively. In particular, this helps them to vary their timetabling of the foundation subjects, and reinforces the message that these subjects are important.

Schools are also varying the times at which the literacy hour and the mathematics lesson are taught during the week, to build in some afternoon sessions. This variation in timetabling is proving effective for teaching and learning.



Examples

What goes where in the timetable?

- An infant school wanted a more varied pattern of activities in the morning sessions. By making small adjustments to break, registration and assembly times, it produced a new basic timetable for all classes. The morning sessions now consist of a one-hour lesson and two 45-minute lessons. The afternoon sessions have one one-hour lesson and one 45-minute lesson. There is a break in the morning and in the afternoon. This structure provides time for three different activities each morning and enables both literacy and mathematics to be taught in the mornings or the afternoons. In practice, the school timetables the literacy hour in the morning for four days of the week and in the afternoon on Wednesdays. The mathematics lessons are in the morning on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and in the afternoon on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- In a primary school, years 3 to 6 have three one-hour lessons in the morning. They then have one one-hour lesson and one 45-minute lesson in the afternoon. Working with this structure, class teachers can decide on their own timetable, using the following principles agreed by all staff:
 1. There must be daily one-hour lessons of literacy and mathematics.
 2. Most of the literacy and mathematics lessons must be in the morning.
 3. There must also be two one-hour lessons for science each week.
 4. PE must be taught every week.
 5. Every morning session must include a non-core subject.
 6. Afternoon lessons can be combined to create a single longer lesson.

The diagram below shows how one class teacher applied these principles to create a timetable that varies from day to day. Only the core subjects are shown.

	M	T	W	Th	F
1 hr	Literacy	Maths	Literacy	Literacy	Maths
1 hr		Science			Literacy
1 hr	Maths		Science	Maths	
1 hr		Literacy	Maths		
45 min					

How might we group children?

What different kinds of grouping do we use, and why?

How might we group children for different subjects?



Examples

Grouping children

Schools group children in various ways for different purposes. Some organise children into ability sets for individual subjects or a range of subjects. Most will identify groups or individuals, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, who need additional or different lessons and activities, because their abilities or aptitudes are out of the ordinary.

How might we group children?

- A primary school groups key stage 2 children by ability within their classes for both English and mathematics lessons, as there are large differences in attainment between children. The school feels that ability grouping ensures all children receive teaching that is well matched to their needs. All other subjects are taught in mixed-ability groups. In year 2, for mathematics, the lowest achieving children are taught in a separate group by the mathematics coordinator. This focused support helps them to progress as far as possible before they enter the next key stage.
- In a junior school, groups are based on ability only for lessons in the core subjects. At other times, children are allowed to form their own groups. They are also organised in other ways to help broaden their experience of working with children outside their friendship or ability groups. Occasionally, lessons are taught in single-sex groups. For example, in ICT, when one teacher noted differences between boys' and girls' enthusiasm and involvement in lessons, he organised single-sex lessons. Girls seemed to be more interested and active during these sessions, and gained confidence with both hardware and software. This arrangement will be reviewed so that its long-term success can be considered.

Organising intervention programmes and booster classes in literacy and mathematics

Schools may provide a range of lessons specifically targeting individuals and groups who need help with English and mathematics beyond the curriculum planned for the majority of children. For example, in year 1, the Early Literacy Support (ELS) programme involves a small group of children working with a teaching assistant on a daily basis. This support is provided for children who show early signs of struggling with reading and writing, and aims to reduce the number of children who fail to make good progress at key stage 1. In years 3 and 4, some schools may provide Additional Literacy Support (ALS) for children who have fallen behind expectations, while Further Literacy Support (FLS) may be organised for such children in year 5. Some schools use the Springboard catch-up programme for years 3, 4, 5 and 6 to support children's number skills beyond the work they complete in the daily mathematics lesson.

How do we organise additional support in literacy and mathematics?

Which children need intervention programmes or booster classes?

When might we timetable these lessons?

How do we ensure that all children continue to receive a broad and balanced curriculum?

Booster classes are often provided for year 5 and year 6 children who might benefit from some additional support in English and mathematics. The overall aim is to help children do as well as possible in the key stage tests so that they enter key stage 3 confident and better prepared for secondary education.

There are three general ways of timetabling intervention programmes and booster support:

- as focused support during English and mathematics lessons;
- through withdrawal from lessons;
- in extra classes outside taught time, particularly at key stage 2. These classes might take place before school, in the lunch break, or after school.

Where intervention programmes occur during taught time and children are withdrawn from other national curriculum subjects, schools need to make decisions about staffing and timetabling to ensure that all children continue to receive a broad and balanced curriculum.



How do we organise additional support in literacy and mathematics?

- In one school, year 1 children are withdrawn for 20 minutes each afternoon during the spring and summer terms for Early Literacy Support sessions. This means they can still take part in the range of literacy activities planned for the class. The school also ensures that they do not miss out on PE and whole school assemblies, because it considers these to be a priority.
- A junior school provides additional Springboard mathematics classes for year 3 children identified as struggling with basic number operations. They receive one hour of additional teaching each week. The timetabling of this lesson varies, so that the children do not miss out on any one area of the curriculum, and teachers also make sure that this lesson isn't timetabled in the same morning or afternoon as the daily mathematics lesson.
- One school teaches year 6 booster classes in the morning from 8:20am to 8:50am or after school from 3:45pm to 4:15pm. Drinks and biscuits are offered during these classes, as they take place when children's energy levels can be low. The refreshments have also proved to be an incentive for the children to attend.
- A junior school that is determined to support children performing below expectations in English and mathematics has timetabled additional 'catch up' sessions for particular groups throughout the year. These focus on mathematics in the autumn term and literacy in the spring term. In years 3 and 4, sessions focus on delivering Additional Literacy Support, while children who need support in mathematics work with teaching assistants on Springboard programmes. The timetable opposite shows how these sessions are organised for one half term, in a year 4 class. This half term, the 'catch up' sessions take place while the rest of the class is focusing on sustained reading.

	M	T	W	Th	F
8:55	REGISTRATION				
9:00	Literacy hour (60 mins)	Daily Mathematics lesson (60 mins)	Assembly (20 mins)	Daily Mathematics lesson (60 mins)	Assembly (20 mins)
					Daily Mathematics lesson (60 mins)
	Assembly (20 mins)	Assembly (20 mins)		Assembly (20 mins)	
10:20	BREAK				
10:35	PE (45 mins)	Science (45 mins)	Music (30 mins)	Music (45 mins)	PE (45 mins)
	Daily Mathematics lesson (60 mins)	Sustained reading/'catch up' groups (30 mins)	Literacy hour (60 mins)	Literacy hour (60 mins)	Daily Mathematics lesson (60 mins)
		ICT (30 mins)			
12:20	LUNCH AND REGISTRATION				
13:15	Sustained reading/'catch up' groups (30 mins)	Literacy - sustained writing (75 mins)	Art and Design (75 mins)	D&T (75 mins)	Sustained reading/'catch up' groups (15 mins)
	ICT (45 mins)				
14:30	BREAK				
14:45	Geography (45 mins)	PE (45 mins)	Geography (45 mins)	Sustained reading/'catch up' groups (15 mins)	RE (45 mins)
15:30					

How can timetabling help us to make the most of our resources?

How should we timetable ICT resources to maximise their use?

What changes might we make to the way we organise our staff?



Examples

Using resources effectively

Schools have considerable flexibility in deciding how they deploy staff and resources in order to meet children's needs and to deliver the curriculum. They also have to consider how resourcing might affect the structure of the timetable. For example, if a school has invested significantly in ICT, cooking facilities or a swimming pool, they will want to timetable these for as much of the school day as possible.

How can timetabling help us to make the most of our resources?

- One school timetables slots for all classes in the hall, library and ICT suite so that they are put to maximum use throughout the school day. Some slots, particularly at the beginning and end of the morning and afternoon sessions, are left free to allow individuals and small groups from different classes to receive targeted support. For example, four children identified as having poor coordination have a daily routine of physical activities in the hall for the first 10 minutes of the morning.
- To support a school's commitment to music, a part-time teacher covers the music coordinator's class for two afternoons each week, so that she can be released to provide violin and recorder lessons. She organises short sessions for small groups and sometimes uses this time to prepare the children for school concerts. As the part-time teacher has a particular expertise in the humanities, she takes on the teaching of geography and history in her two weekly sessions, using plans drawn up with the class teacher.
- In a large junior school with rather limited playground space, the timing of the morning break is staggered so that no more than two year groups use the playground at one time. This allows all the children to benefit from increased space and a wider variety of games and activities. By varying the timetabling of this break for different year groups each term, different classes have the chance to interact with each other in the playground, and this has helped to improve relationships across classes.

4. Case studies



The following case studies summarise how three different schools have designed and timetabled their own individual curriculum, that works for them in their particular circumstances.

These examples give a snapshot of the curriculum at one point in time. The schools continue to adapt the curriculum in response to the needs of different cohorts of children, and other opportunities and changes.





Case study 1

AN INNER-CITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Characteristics and context

Our school is in quite a disadvantaged area but we have a mix of children from different economic backgrounds. There are 443 children on roll, with 226 receiving free school meals, 122 with special educational needs and 238 who have English as an additional language. Our numbers and the population of the school change quite rapidly: in the last two years, 99 children have left and another 103 have joined.

Values and aims

We aim to provide a high standard of education by supporting, motivating and inspiring children. Many of the children may not have settled or are new arrivals, so we make it a priority to promote children's independence and confidence. We encourage them to act as responsible members of both the school community and the wider community. Everyone is expected to show respect and tolerance for others, regardless of gender, race, religion or culture.

We support our aims in different ways through lessons and assemblies, as well as other events. Our history scheme of work includes a focus on famous people from a range of cultures, and some of the parents help to write bilingual books for the school.

Curriculum design

Because of the number of children learning English as an additional language, our first priority is to develop the children's language skills. We've increased the time spent on English so that we can give more support, particularly for speaking and listening. We also give a high priority to the arts, because we see them as being important to children's development and to their motivation. Children who might not be confident in using English can gain just as much as other children through work in art and design, music, drama and dance.

Most subjects are taught separately. We emphasise strong subject-based planning and teaching so that we can help children develop the specific knowledge and skills they need in each area. We start from the QCA schemes of work when planning the foundation subjects, as this helps us to make sure we are covering the programmes of study. This is particularly important for years 2 and 6 and the summer term of year 5, when we give more time to the core subjects but want to avoid narrowing the curriculum.

Timetabling

The school has a standard three-term year and a five-day week, with a weekly total of 23 hours and 20 minutes of teaching time. Maths and English take up a large proportion of the week. We work from a timetable structure which has timed lesson 'slots'. We can easily put literacy and maths sessions in 50-, 60- or 70-minute slots, and block two sessions for a foundation subject. We can also use a shorter slot for something like circle time. Although subjects might change each term or half term, we don't have to worry about changing the timetable itself, just what we teach in the different slots. This helps with monitoring time allocations too. In years 3, 4 and 5

there are Springboard sessions for groups of children that are timetabled outside maths lessons. We change the days of these sessions every half term so the children don't miss the same lessons all the time.

Example timetable

This timetable shows how subjects and timings are organised for one half term. The core subjects and PE are taught every week, although timings may vary slightly across the year. Other subjects may not be taught every half term and are sometimes blocked. For example, D&T is not taught in the half term shown, while for this half term, ICT is being taught through history and art and design. The total hours taught in each subject across the year are shown below in the time allocations table. The school fully covers the programmes of study for each subject at each key stage.

YEAR 5 Summer term – first half

	M	T	W	Th	F
8:50	REGISTRATION (SPELLING PRACTICE)				
9:00	Science	English	Mathematics	PE	English
10:00	Mathematics	Mathematics	English	Mathematics	Mathematics
10:50	BREAK				
11:05	English	RE	Science	English	Drama
12:15	LUNCH				
13:15	Registration (5 mins) and quiet mathematics or reading – pupil target-setting conferences on Mon, Wed and Thurs when support teacher available.				
13:25	History/ICT	Music	English	Geography	Art & Design/ICT
14:15	History/ICT	PE	English	Geography	Art & Design/ICT
15:05	Junior assembly	Junior assembly	Class assembly	Year group assembly	Whole school assembly
15:20					

Time allocations year 5 hours per year	English	285	ICT	33	Music	40
	Mathematics	156	History	33	PE	45
	Science	72	Geography	33	RE	45
	D&T	33	Art and Design	45	PSHE/Cit.	20
					Total	840

Other features

Some children with SEN have support from specialist teachers and learning mentors. We also provide art therapy for children with particular emotional needs, and get additional support from a speech therapist. Two classrooms have a sound field system for children with impaired hearing.



Case study 2

A SUBURBAN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Characteristics and context

We are quite a large junior school in an affluent town. Our intake is mostly made up of children with professional parents, although a variety of backgrounds and home circumstances are represented in the school. Of the 384 children, five per cent claim free school meals, one per cent have English as an additional language and nine per cent have special educational needs. The school is one of the highest performing in the area and is over-subscribed.

Values and aims

Our aims are to provide the necessary experience and activities to help children develop fully at the junior phase, while helping them to become individuals. We value independence, self-respect and self-motivation, and our curriculum provides children with the opportunities to develop these characteristics. We also promote a creative and practical approach to learning.

Curriculum design

The school is vertically grouped into years 3–4 and years 5–6 classes, and we organise the curriculum on a two-year cycle. We have our own schemes of work that include individual subjects and some projects that involve more than one subject. This way of organising learning supports our ethos of developing independence and creativity, because the children can be more involved in making choices and developing interests. The projects have a practical focus so children can apply their learning in context, and we can also build in extension and differentiation. D&T, art and design and ICT are combined in different ways as topics. Mathematics, English, PE, RE, music and drama are mostly taught separately. PSHE is taught in different ways, including drama, role-play and special assemblies. Science is taught as a separate subject for most of the time, but sometimes it is included in topics that focus on D&T and ICT.

Timetabling

We have three terms a year and 23 hours and 45 minutes of taught time per week. The core subjects are taught every week, but the foundation subjects vary. There is a history fortnight in the spring term, and a lot of the geography curriculum is taught through 10 days of themed blocks. We also teach these subjects at other times of the year to focus on reinforcing and developing skills.

PE is timetabled first so we can make sure it is spread across the week, and because of the practical issue of finding ways to fit all classes into a timetable for the hall. Maths and English each have at least one session a day, of 50 minutes or more.

Other lessons are different lengths, and we use the timetable flexibly to reflect the priorities for each half term. We organise after-school booster classes for year 6 children in the autumn and spring.

Example timetable

This timetable shows how subjects and timings are organised for one half term. The core subjects, as well as PE and RE, are taught every week, although timings may vary slightly across the year. Other subjects may not be taught every half term and are sometimes blocked. Total hours taught in each subject across the year are shown below in the time allocations table. The school fully covers the key stage 2 programmes of study for each subject.

		Year 3/4 Spring term – first half (minutes for each lesson are shown in brackets)					TOPIC: Shapes and Structures		
		M	T	W	Th	F			
8:45	8:55	REGISTRATION							
		Shapes & Structures (A&D / ICT) (85 mins)	Games (50 mins)	Mathematics (50 mins)	Assembly (Y3/4) (until 9:15)	Handwriting (until 9:15) (20 mins)			
			Shapes & Structures (Science) (35 mins)	Gym (35 mins)	Mathematics (50 mins)	Mathematics (55 mins)			
10:20	10:40		Assembly (whole school)	Assembly (class)	Assembly (class)	Singing (Music) (35 mins)	Assembly (class performances)		
11:00	BREAK								
		Literacy (70 mins)	Mathematics (70 mins)	Library (35 mins)	Shapes & Structures (A&D / ICT) (70 mins)	Shapes & Structures (A&D / ICT) (70 mins)			
12:10				Music (35 mins)					
13:10	LUNCH								
13:10	REGISTRATION								
13:15		Mathematics (60 mins)	Literacy (60 mins)	Literacy (60 mins)	Gym (until 14:05) (50 mins)	Literacy (60 mins)			
14:15		RE (70 mins)	Shapes & Structures (Science / D&T) (70 mins)	Shapes & Structures (Science / D&T) (70 mins)	Writing (80 mins)	PSHE (70 mins)			
15:25									

Time allocations year 3/4 hours per year	English	240	ICT	35	Music	35
	Mathematics	171	History	41	PE	55
	Science	80	Geography	41	RE	45
	D&T	50	Art and Design	35	PSHE/Cit.	27
					Total	855

Other features

The school has a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including clubs for gardening and French and a choir. Some activities, such as tennis and karate, are taught by qualified coaches, and children pay a fee to join these. We also have an active school council.



Case study 3

AN INFANT SCHOOL

Characteristics and context

Our school is in a small town on the south-east coast of England that is twinned with a similar one on the French coast in Normandy. The area we serve is fairly prosperous, with low levels of unemployment. We have 128 children on roll currently, with some children from long-established local families. We also have a growing number of parents who commute to jobs in the county's main city. Overall, three per cent of our children receive free school meals, 13 per cent are identified as having SEN (including two children with hearing impairments), and three per cent of the children are from ethnic minority communities. We have only one EAL child, who is a recent arrival from Sweden.

Values and aims

We aim to provide a broad and balanced education that is relevant to children's lives today and will prepare them for their future. Our school is a safe, caring environment in which children feel respected and supported. We set high standards across all aspects of school life and have high expectations of our children. Because of our location, we place a high importance on linking international developments to everyday life. We think it is essential for our children to be aware of their nearest neighbours on the continent and take an interest in other communities and cultures.

Curriculum design

We have worked hard at developing our curriculum so that there is clear progression from reception to year 2, and children build on their learning in each subject and across subjects. Most teaching from year 1 is subject-based so that children get used to the concepts and content of each subject and become confident with the relevant vocabulary. We focus on making sure that children are secure with the basics in reception. Any children who are struggling receive extra one-to-one support in maths and English before school or are targeted through the ELS programme in year 1.

We give a particular priority to geography because of its contribution to children's wider knowledge and understanding. Each year we have a cross-channel day-trip that supports our programme of French teaching. In year 1, there are two 15-minute lessons of French a week, and two 20-minute lessons in year 2. We also focus on PSHE and citizenship because we think these have an important role to play in helping the children to develop as responsible citizens. The activities provide useful links with the local community. We also try to develop thinking skills across the curriculum.

Timetabling

Our timetable has a basic structure of two sessions in the morning and two sessions in the afternoon. These sessions are divided up into lessons of various lengths, depending on the subject and whether time needs to be blocked, as some subjects such as history and design and technology aren't taught every half term. We have daily English and maths lessons, and science is usually taught for at least two sessions per week.

Example timetable

This timetable shows how subjects and timings are organised for one term. The core subjects and PE are taught every week, although timings may vary slightly across the year. Other subjects, particularly history, geography, music and design and technology, may not be taught every half term and are sometimes blocked. Total hours taught in each subject across the year are shown below in the time allocations table. The school fully covers the programmes of study for each subject at key stage 1.

Year 2 Autumn term (minutes for each lesson are shown in brackets)

	M	T	W	Th	F
8:55	Registration	Registration & Assembly	Registration	Registration & Assembly	Registration & Assembly
	English (75 mins)	Mathematics (45 mins)	English (75 mins)	Science (45 mins)	PE (70 mins)
	RE (30 mins)	PSHE (45 mins)	RE (30 mins)	Mathematics (45 mins)	French (20 mins)
10:45	BREAK				
11:05	Mathematics (50 mins)	English (60 mins)	Mathematics (50 mins)	English (60 mins)	Mathematics (60 mins)
12:05	Assembly		Assembly		
13:05	LUNCH				
13:10	REGISTRATION				
	French (20 mins)	Geography (60 mins)	D&T (60 mins)	Music (40 mins)	English (60 mins)
	PE (40 mins)			Art & Design (20 mins)	
14:10	BREAK				
14:20	Science (55 mins)	Geography (55 mins)	D&T (35 mins)	Art & Design (55 mins)	ICT (55 mins)
15:15			Music (20 mins)		

Time allocations year 2 hours per year	English	198	History	33	MFL	24
	Mathematics	144	Geography	44	RE	36
	Science	60	Art and Design	45	PSHE/Cit.	36
	D&T	37	Music	36		
	ICT	33	PE	69		
					Total	795

Other features

We run a variety of clubs outside taught time. At the moment these include treble and descant recorders, construction kits, fitness and running. We also offer cycling proficiency in the summer term.

Appendix 1: A basis for deciding time allocations

There are no statutory time allocations for national curriculum subjects. However, the national strategies for literacy and numeracy prescribe a daily amount of time for literacy and mathematics. It is up to each school to determine the amount of time needed for its children to cover the programmes of study successfully in all subjects. The challenge for each school is to decide how to give enough teaching time to the core subjects, while at the same time ensuring that children study a broad and balanced curriculum in sufficient depth and to the expected standard.

Starting points

The times shown in the tables are starting points in the sense that a school would need to be very cautious about giving less teaching time to a subject, and would be likely to give more time to some subjects.

Flexibility about the time given to subjects

At key stages 1 and 2 there is significant flexibility. The starting points add up to approximately 85 per cent of teaching time, leaving 15 per cent which can be allocated either within or outside the national curriculum.

The school can decide to give more time to certain subjects, and it can teach other subjects such as PSHE and citizenship or a modern foreign language.

The 15 per cent flexibility applies to the 36 teaching weeks. In the full school year of 38 weeks, the flexibility is even greater.

Drawing up a timetable

QCA's annual monitoring of the school curriculum gathers extensive information from a representative sample of schools as well as from LEAs and professional associations. The monitoring evidence collected since the 1995 review of the national curriculum suggests that the times in the tables below are a sensible place to start when deciding the teaching time needed to produce a broad, well-balanced primary curriculum for every child.

The times in the table are intended as starting points. There is no expectation that they will exactly match the length of lessons or fit neatly into the school day, as these vary from one school to another. For example, a school with several one-hour lessons in a week may give particular foundation subjects an hour rather than 50 or 55 minutes. The starting points are there to help the school decide whether it is likely to be providing adequate time for each subject. In practice, schools decide which subjects will receive more time, and should be able to justify the amount of time they give to each subject.

The starting points are shown on both a weekly and an annual basis. They are averaged over the whole of the key stage. In other words, the weekly figures show the number of teaching hours there would be for a subject each week, if the subject were to be taught weekly. Schools have the flexibility to teach some subjects in some weeks, or terms, and not in other weeks, or terms, provided that the full programme of study is covered during the key stage. However, it is recommended that English and mathematics are taught every day, and that PE is taught regularly each week.

The tables are based on 36 weeks of teaching time in a teaching year of 38 weeks (190 days). This allows two weeks (10 days) for special curriculum events and activities such as religious festivals, concerts, educational visits and sports day.

DES Circular 7/90 recommends a minimum of 21 hours teaching time each week for children in key stage 1 and a minimum of 23½ hours teaching time each week for children in key stage 2, exclusive of registration, collective worship, breaks and lunch.

Schools should allocate teaching time according to their judgement of what is best for their children. The tables indicate how the first 85 per cent or so of time is likely to be allocated in order to satisfy basic statutory requirements. After this, the priority for many schools will be to allocate a further amount of time to top up the teaching of English and mathematics. This will have an impact on the scope for increasing the time for other subjects.

The following tables show how taught time might be allocated across any one year of a key stage. However, not all year groups will have the same time allocations. They may change from year to year. In addition, the balance of time allocations for individuals or groups of children who receive additional support in literacy and mathematics may be different to those of the majority of children in a year group.

Flexibility about when subjects are taught across the key stage

English and mathematics are best taught on a daily basis and PE regularly each week.

However, other subjects do not necessarily have to be taught every week, every half term, or even every term.

The table shows hours per week averaged over the whole of the key stage. A school might, for example, give more time to history and less to geography in one year and then reverse the pattern in the following year.

English

For English, the table shows a range of times based on the daily literacy hour and a suggested upper limit which includes the additional time that might be needed to teach other aspects of English.

Starting points for key stage 1

KEY STAGE 1 Starting points			
	Hours:minutes for subjects recommended to be taught each week	Total hours over one year of 36 weeks	Percentage* of a 21-hour teaching week
English	5:00 – 7:30	180 – 270	24% – 36%
Mathematics	3:45	135	18%
Science	(1:30 if taught weekly)	54	7%
D&T	(0:50 if taught weekly)	30	4%
ICT	(0:50 if taught weekly)	30	4%
History	(0:50 if taught weekly)	30	4%
Geography	(0:50 if taught weekly)	30	4%
Art and Design	(0:50 if taught weekly)	30	4%
Music	(0:50 if taught weekly)	30	4%
PE	1:15	45	6%
RE	1:00	36	5%
Totals	17:30 – 20:00	630 – 720	84% – 96%

* Percentages are shown rounded to nearest whole figure.

At key stage 1, monitoring shows that the overwhelming majority of schools teach for 22 or more hours a week. Therefore, for a typical school, in the total teaching year of 38 weeks or 836 hours, the total flexibility is 206 hours, which is close to 25 per cent of teaching time.

Flexibility about when subjects are taught across the key stage

English and mathematics are best taught on a daily basis and PE regularly each week.

However, other subjects do not necessarily have to be taught every week, every half term, or even every term.

The table shows hours per week averaged over the whole of the key stage. A school might, for example, give more time to history and less to geography in one year and then reverse the pattern in the following year.

English

For English, the table shows a range of times based on the daily literacy hour and the additional time that might be needed to teach other aspects of English.

Mathematics

The National Numeracy Strategy recommends a range of lesson lengths at key stage 2.

Starting points for key stage 2

KEY STAGE 2 Starting points			
	Hours:minutes for subjects recommended to be taught each week	Total hours over one year of 36 weeks	Percentage* of a 23½-hour teaching week
English	5:00 – 7:30	180 – 270	21% – 32%
Mathematics	4:10 – 5:00	150 – 180	18% – 21%
Science	(2:00 if taught weekly)	72	9%
D&T	(0:55 if taught weekly)	33	4%
ICT	(0:55 if taught weekly)	33	4%
History	(0:55 if taught weekly)	33	4%
Geography	(0:55 if taught weekly)	33	4%
Art and Design	(0:55 if taught weekly)	33	4%
Music	(0:55 if taught weekly)	33	4%
PE	1:15	45	5%
RE	1:15	45	5%
Totals	19:10 – 22:30	690 – 810	82% – 96%

* Percentages are shown rounded to nearest whole figure.

Notes on the starting points for key stages 1 and 2

The starting points are based on the programmes of study for each national curriculum subject. They take into account the notional times that guided the Dearing Review of the national curriculum, subsequent evidence from QCA’s monitoring, and the following considerations:

- The starting points for English are based on *The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for teaching* which advocates a daily literacy hour. This framework does not cover all aspects of the English programmes of study. Schools will need to allocate additional time for speaking and listening, drama, the reading of a class novel and some more sustained reading and writing. For this reason, the tables show a suggested range of times for English.
- The starting points for mathematics are based on *The National Numeracy Strategy: Framework for teaching mathematics*, which advocates a daily lesson lasting for about 45 minutes in key stage 1 and for 50–60 minutes in key stage 2.
- The intervention programmes for literacy and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 may result in individual children, or groups of children, being allocated additional time in these subjects. Nonetheless, it is important that these children receive a broad and balanced curriculum.

- The starting points for ICT are based on the expectation that there will also be significant opportunities for children to apply and develop their ICT capability in those subjects where there is a requirement to do so.
- The starting points for physical education reflect the Government's commitment in the education White Paper: *Schools achieving success*, 2001, to 'an entitlement of two hours of high quality PE and sport each week in and out of school for all children'.
- The starting points for RE are based on DFE circular 1/94, *Religious Education and Collective Worship*, which states that 36 hours a year will be devoted to religious education in key stage 1 and 45 hours a year in key stage 2.

Decisions to be made by schools

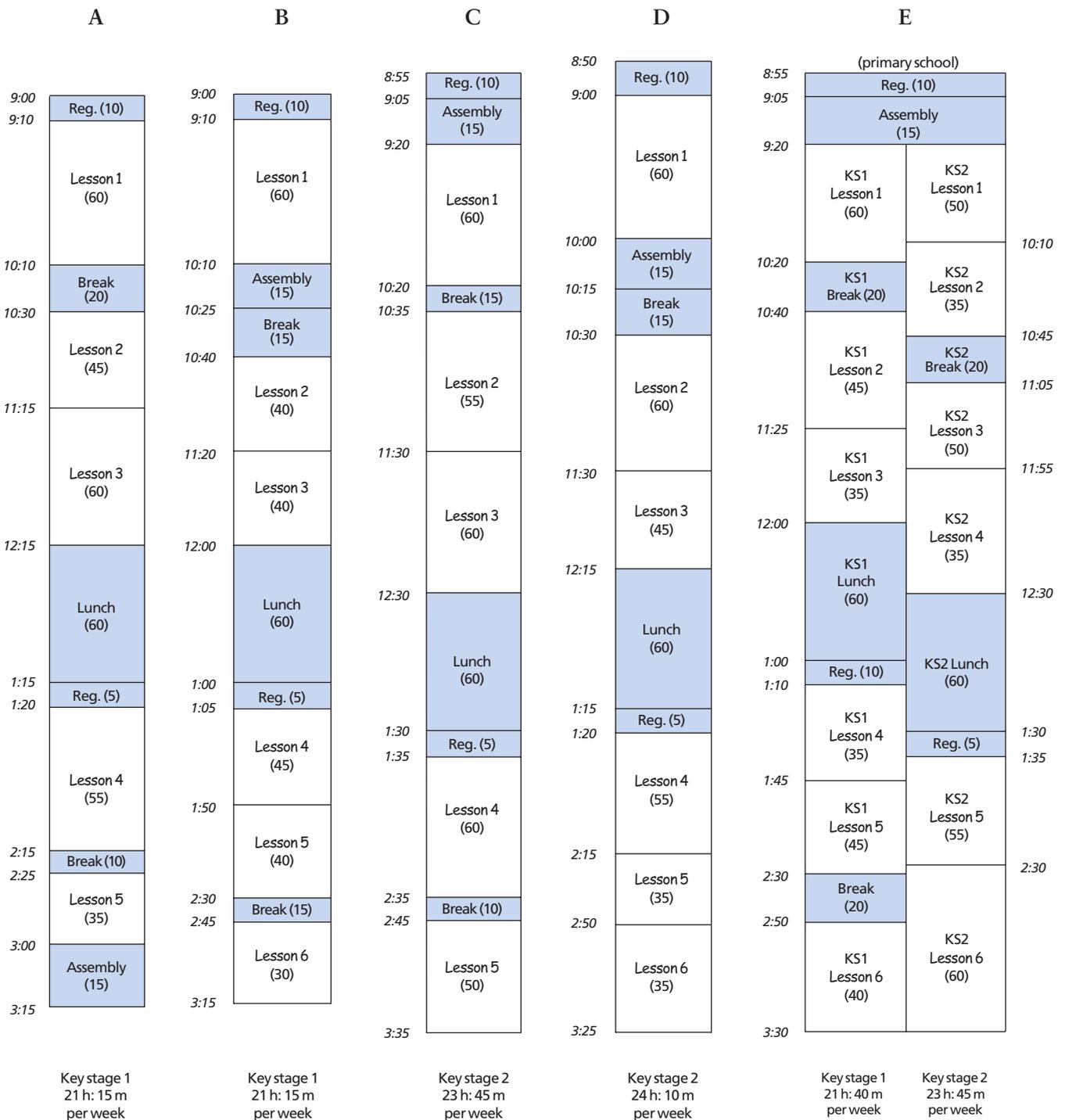
The way time is allocated will depend on schools' analysis of children's needs and also on the aims, priorities and character of the school. Decisions about the use of time should inform the school development plan and be derived from it. Schools also need to take into account national initiatives to raise standards of attainment and to strengthen learning and teaching.

The time given to a subject will result from discussions between the governors, the headteacher and teachers, taking account of priorities identified by the school and any constraints imposed by staffing or accommodation.

Time allocated to subjects is likely to vary between schools, and between years and particular classes in a school. In addition, there may be separate time allocations for individual children or groups of children, in order to help them meet their particular learning needs.

Appendix 2: Examples of daily timetables

These five examples show different ways of structuring the school day. Figures in brackets show the number of minutes spent on each activity. The total weekly teaching time shown at the foot of each timetable excludes registration, collective worship, breaks and lunch. Assembly often incorporates a variety of activities, usually including collective worship. Assemblies are excluded from calculations of teaching time given here.



Appendix 3: Sources of guidance

Guidance on teaching national curriculum subjects, religious education and sex and relationship education

The National Curriculum: *Handbook for primary teachers in England*. This includes non-statutory guidelines for: personal, social and health education and citizenship at key stages 1 and 2, and modern foreign languages at key stage 2.

www.nc.uk.net

The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for teaching, DfEE 1998.

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy

The National Numeracy Strategy: Framework for teaching mathematics, DfEE 1999.

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/numeracy

QCA/DfES schemes of work: science, ICT, design and technology, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education, religious education, modern foreign languages and citizenship.

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes

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

Guidance on sex and relationship education is available from the DfES, reference DfES/0116/2000.

Other useful publications and websites

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

Working with gifted and talented children, key stages 1 and 2 English and mathematics, QCA/01/801.

Information and resources relating to booster classes, intervention programmes and transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/numeracy

Bridging units in mathematics

Algebra: introducing symbols, QCA/00/577.

Linking fractions, decimals and percentages, QCA/00/578.

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

Acknowledgements

This guide draws on the experiences and expertise of the schools listed below. We are grateful to them for providing detailed information about their schools' approaches to developing the primary curriculum, and for their enthusiastic discussion of related issues. We also wish to thank the many other schools who have met with QCA to explore these matters.

All Saints CE Primary School	Chatham
Allerton Primary School	Bradford
Argyle Primary School	Camden
Barford St Peters Primary School	Warwickshire
Barton Primary School	Torbay
The Bawburgh Primary School	Norfolk
Boxgrove Primary School	Surrey
Bridge Junior School	Leicester City
Cheam Common Junior School	Sutton
Clapham Terrace Community Primary School and Nursery	Warwickshire
Claypool Community Primary School	Bolton
Colby Primary School	Norfolk
College Town Junior School	Bracknell Forest
The Coombes County Infant and Nursery School	Wokingham
Crawcrook St Agnes RC Primary School	Gateshead
Crawley Ridge Infant School	Surrey
Cunningham Hill Infants School	Hertfordshire
Danley Middle School	Kent
Eastfield Primary School	Enfield
Eden Park Infant and Nursery School	Torbay
Eglington CE First School	Northumberland
Framlingham Sir Robert Hitchams CE Primary School	Suffolk
Freelands CE Primary School	Oxfordshire
Giggleswick Primary School	North Yorkshire
Grafton Primary School	Islington
Greenhill Primary School	Sheffield
Guillemont Junior School	Hampshire
Hampton Hargate Primary School	City of Peterborough
Hollyfast Primary School	Coventry
Hook CE Primary School	East Riding of Yorkshire
Horbury Primary School	Wakefield
Hotspur Primary School	Newcastle upon Tyne
Knowle CE Primary School	Solihull
Lister Junior School	Liverpool
Locks Heath Junior School	Hampshire
Manor Junior School	Barking and Dagenham
Millbank Primary School	Westminster
Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School	Northamptonshire
Ocker Hill Junior School	Sandwell
Peatmoor Community Primary School	Swindon
Ponteland County Middle School	Northumberland
Queen Eleanor Combined School	Milton Keynes
Ralph Butterfield Primary School	City of York
Robert Wilkinson Primary School	City of York
Roseacre Primary School and Nursery School	Blackpool
Sandling Primary School	Kent
Sandy Place Middle School	Bedfordshire
Shelley Primary School	West Sussex
St Joseph's RC Primary School	Redcar & Cleveland
St Stephens Junior School	Kent
St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School	Bolton
Stakeford First School	Northumberland
The Station First School CE Primary School	Northumberland
Stockton Primary School	Warwickshire
Sutton-under-Whitstonecliffe CE Primary School	North Yorkshire
West Down Primary School	Devon
Woodlands Infant School	Solihull
Woodlands Primary School	Grimsby

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