

PRIMARY

QUICK GUIDE TO THE CURRICULUM

*What To Expect When Your Child
Starts Primary School*



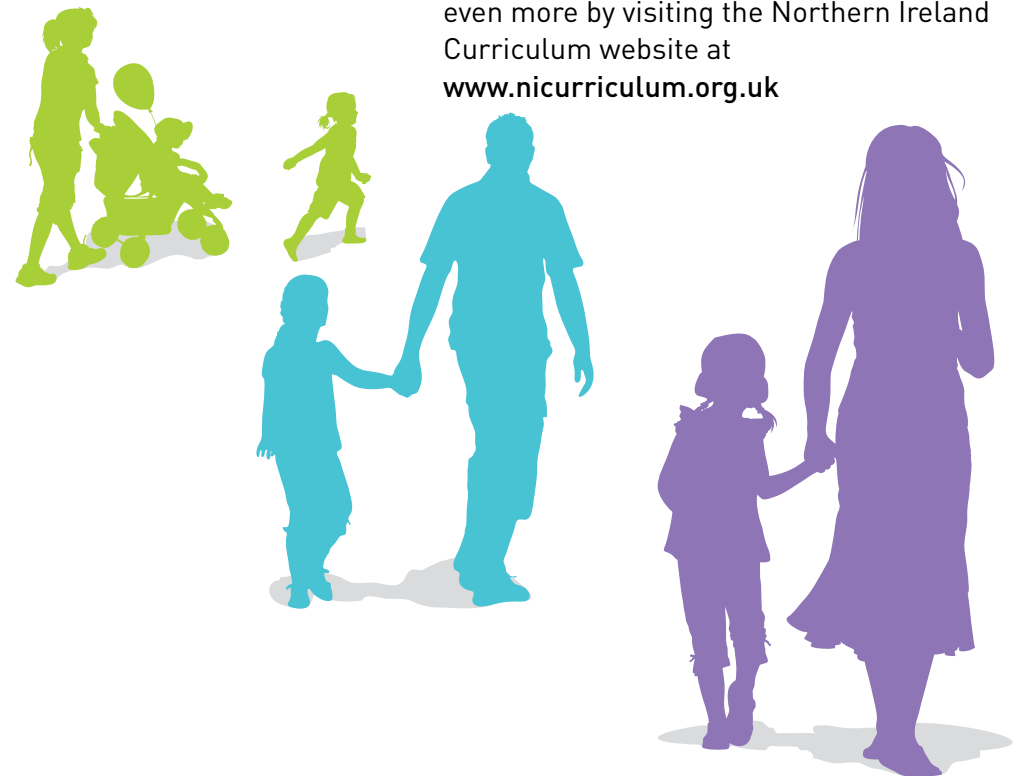
PRIMARY QUICK GUIDE TO THE CURRICULUM

We live in a changing world. Our children will have more career choices than we did.

To succeed, our children need to be able to respond to change and apply their knowledge and skills in a wide range of situations.

To prepare your child for the future, the school curriculum needed to adapt. In 2007, some important changes were made to the curriculum for all children aged 4–16. These have been introduced slowly. 2009/10 was the first school year that all pupils experienced the new curriculum.

This booklet gives you a brief overview of the curriculum's key features. Find out even more by visiting the Northern Ireland Curriculum website at www.nicurriculum.org.uk

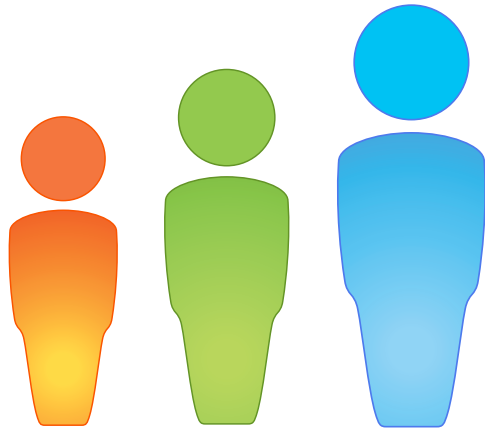


The Stages

Your child's time at primary school is divided into three key stages.

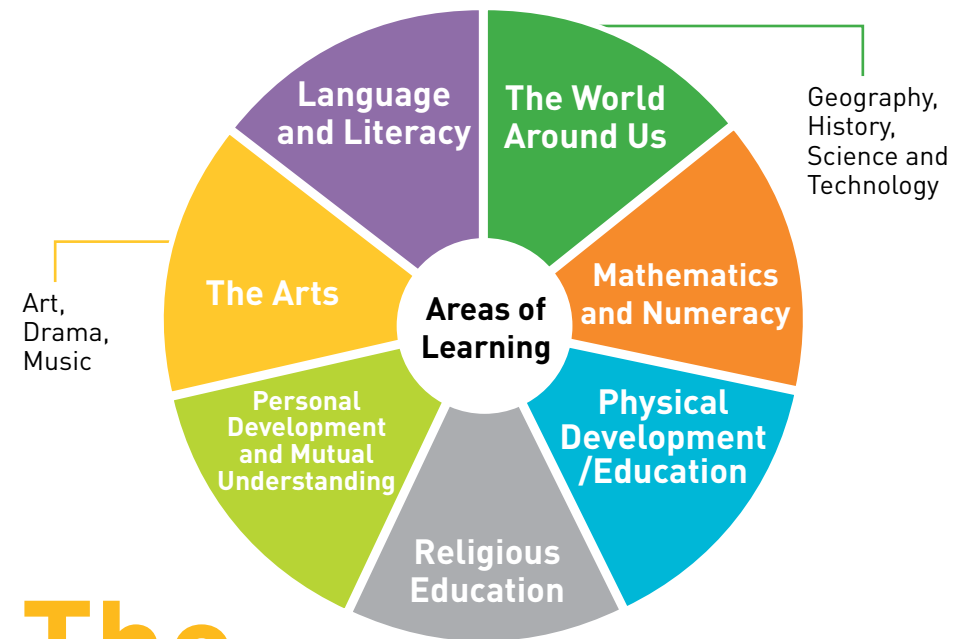
Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
Year 1-2 (P1-2) Age 4-6	Year 3-4 (P3-4) Age 6-8	Year 5, 6, 7 (P5,6,7) Age 8-11

They will go into the Foundation Stage when they start primary school. In this stage, which covers their first two years at school, your child will experience well-planned and challenging play that builds on their interests and curiosity. Teachers will encourage them to explore their feelings and emotions and how to work with others. These are basic skills that your child will need throughout their life.



The vital, lifelong skills of talking and listening, reading, writing and maths are also at the heart of the Foundation Stage. Your child will be taught these skills every day in an active and enjoyable way.

Throughout primary school, in the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2, your child will learn a range of subjects as well as develop important skills for life, such as being able to solve problems or to use technology.



The Subjects

There are many familiar faces in the curriculum, and children still learn about the key subjects, such as maths and science.

Subjects are grouped together under Areas of Learning. This helps your child see how different parts of the curriculum relate to one another.

For example, the World Around Us Area of Learning brings together geography, history, and science and technology.

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PD&MU) is a new Area of Learning.

It's designed to help your child develop personally, emotionally and socially; learn how to lead a healthy, safe and fulfilled life; and become a confident, independent and responsible person.

Your child will still learn the essential knowledge and skills for each of these Areas of Learning, and no matter how old your child is or where they go to school, there will always be a focus on the skills they need to succeed, such as reading, writing and maths.

The Connections

Children learn best when learning is relevant and connected.

Where possible, teachers will present your child with activities that allow them to learn about, practise and develop skills from a number of subjects through a single topic.

For example, an activity on the 1960s might have your child talk to an adult who lived during the 1960s and record and present their findings. This teaches them about the history of that decade and develops their *talking, listening* and *writing skills*. Further work on the topic might ask them to work in groups to research music, sport or fashion from the decade, and this continues the learning about *history*.

They may then discuss and present their findings to the rest of the class. This creates an opportunity to use and improve their *reading, ICT* and *managing information* skills and their ability to *work with others*.

Connected activities like these, where work on a topic draws on knowledge and skills pupils have developed in previous learning, allow them to see first-hand how what *they know* and *are able to do* can be transferred and adapted in many different ways for different situations.



The Skills to 'Do' well

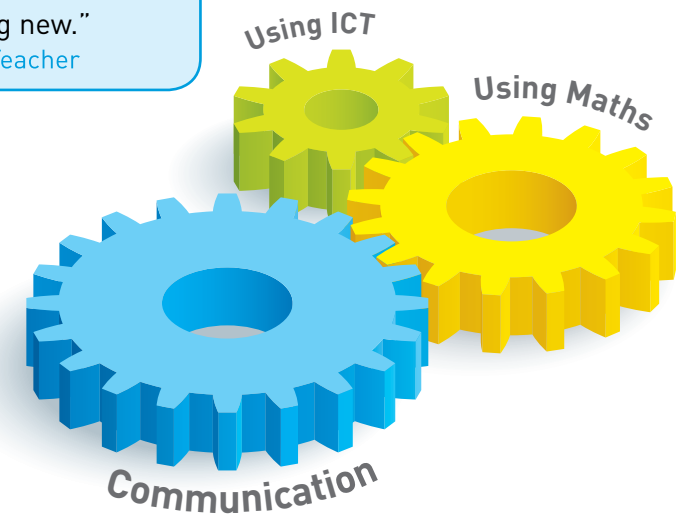
What young people can *do* is as important as what they know and understand.

The curriculum places importance on developing the skills your child needs to learn effectively and be successful in life and work. As a result, teachers will continue to teach, develop and assess essential life skills, such as Communication (reading, writing, talking and listening), Using Mathematics and Using ICT. We refer to these as Cross-Curricular Skills.

Your child will also have lots of opportunities to develop, use and apply thinking skills (such as managing information, being creative, thinking, problem-solving and decision-making) and personal capabilities (like self-management and working with others). These skills are woven through everything your child learns and are a natural part of every area.

"The children in our school have discovered that if something makes you think, you are learning something new."

Teacher



"I love hearing what everyone thinks about my work."
Pupil

The Assessment

Pupils learn better when they look at their work and review how they've done.

The curriculum now strongly encourages pupils to take part in their own evaluation. Throughout the year, teachers will help your child understand why they are learning about a topic and how to improve their learning by getting your child to ask and answer questions such as:

- What did I do well?
- What could I improve for next time?

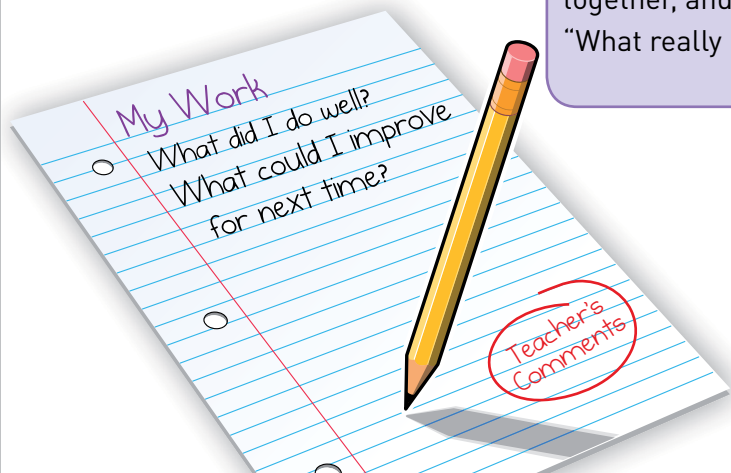
You can also expect to find comments written on your child's work with ideas about how they can improve.

Each autumn in Years 4–7, your child will complete computer-based tests for reading and maths. These help to identify your child's strengths and areas for improvement so that the teacher can plan the teaching and learning to meet your child's needs.

At the annual parents' meeting, you'll be able to talk to the teacher about your child's progress and how you can help support their learning at home.

"I get the children to think about how well they've worked together, and I use questions like: "What really made you think?"

Teacher



The Reporting

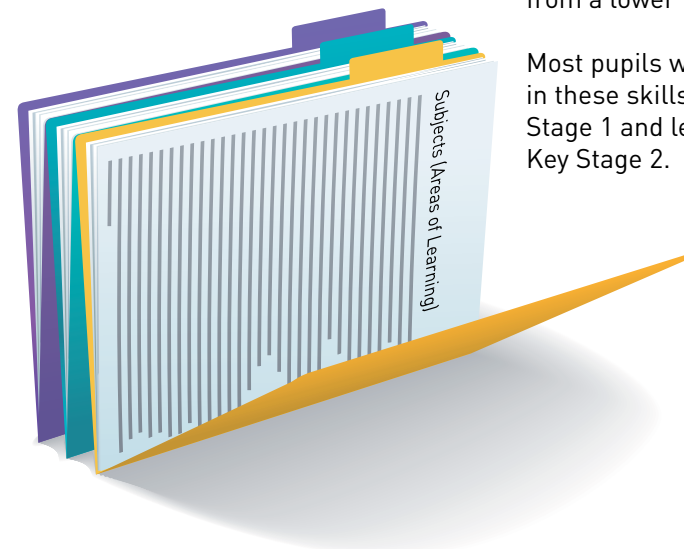
Your child's annual report will tell you about their learning and progress in a number of areas.

Every year, teachers will use the annual report to let you know how your child is performing in the:

- subjects (Areas of Learning);
- Cross-Curricular Skills; and
- Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.

In Years 4 and 7 (at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2), the teacher will give your child a level for each Cross-Curricular Skill based on their observation and assessment of your child's progress. Each level will indicate how well your child is doing in these important areas, and these will appear on their annual report. As a child moves through primary school, it's hoped that their ability in each skill will improve and they will progress from a lower to a higher level.

Most pupils will have achieved level 2 in these skills by the end of Key Stage 1 and level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2.



Want More Information?

If you'd like to know more about the Northern Ireland Curriculum, its Areas of Learning or assessment, please visit the following websites:

The Northern Ireland Curriculum
www.nicurriculum.org.uk

The Department of Education
Northern Ireland
www.deni.gov.uk



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COUNCIL FOR THE CURRICULUM EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

☎ +44 (0)28 9026 1200

☎ +44 (0)28 9026 1234

☎ +44 (0)28 9024 2063

29 Clarendon Road, Clarendon Dock, Belfast BT1 3BG

✉ info@ccea.org.uk

🌐 www.ccea.org.uk

