

Valuing Learners Valuing Learning

Structure and Balance of the Curriculum 5 - 14 Primary Schools

Paper 2

1 Introduction

Dundee City Council Education Department endorses the revised 5-14 National Guidelines on 'The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum' [SABOC]. The National Guidelines and the accompanying 'Guide for Teachers and Managers' contain a range of advice, exemplification and staff development activities that are both relevant and helpful for managers and teachers in primary schools.

This paper offers a synopsis of the key messages for schools as they seek to provide for pupils a curriculum that is based on the principles of breadth, balance, continuity, coherence and progression. Each section below should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of the Revised Strategy for 5-14 in Dundee [RS], National Guidelines on Structure and Balance of the Curriculum 5-14 [NG] and the Guide for Teachers and Managers [GTM]. Key points, exemplification and staff development activities have been identified for ease of reference in the boxes beside each section.

2 New curriculum contexts

The 5-14 curriculum has been undergoing significant change in terms of its content. The recent series of revised and new guidelines has brought many welcome improvements in the content and structure of the curriculum that, in time, schools will be able to incorporate into programmes and activities for the benefit of their pupils. Alongside the progress made by schools in raising attainment and promoting an ethos of achievement built on positive relationships among pupils and staff, exciting developments have taken place in the ways in which teachers have adapted their teaching to make pupils' learning more successful. In addition, new emphases on the nature and purpose of the curriculum have emerged to take account of national priorities such as Social Inclusion, Lifelong Learning, Education for Work and Enterprise and Citizenship. The pace and scope of recent change requires schools more than ever to be clear about the aims of the 5-14 curriculum and confident in the principles which underpin it.

Key Points

RS 1,2,3
NG 1.1 - 1.8

3 Breadth

The principle of breadth provides appropriate experiences to ensure the coverage of a sufficiently comprehensive range of areas of learning.

The 5-14 curriculum should offer a broad basis of experience for all pupils. While there is currently a strong emphasis on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, it is important that the curriculum should not become unduly narrow and so deprive pupils of important experience in other areas. The curriculum areas are:

- language [including a modern language],
- mathematics,
- environmental studies,
- expressive arts
- religious and moral education with personal and social development and health.

In and through each of these curriculum areas, pupils gain the essential experiences that help them acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions. Cross-curricular aspects address important and developing contemporary issues and prepare pupils for life in a society that is rapidly changing. They can be covered in contexts and topics already identified in curriculum programmes for the main areas [eg education for work within environmental studies] or through separate focussed topics and activities [eg aspects of health relating to drugs].

Key Points

RS 6.5,
Appendix 1
NG 3.1 –3.3



4 Balance

The principle of balance ensures that appropriate time is allocated to each of the curricular areas and that provision is made for a variety of learning experiences.

Minimum time allocation and pupil entitlement.

Each curriculum area is given a minimum recommended time allocation to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum. This minimum allocation to each curriculum area is the basic entitlement for all pupils in Dundee primary schools.

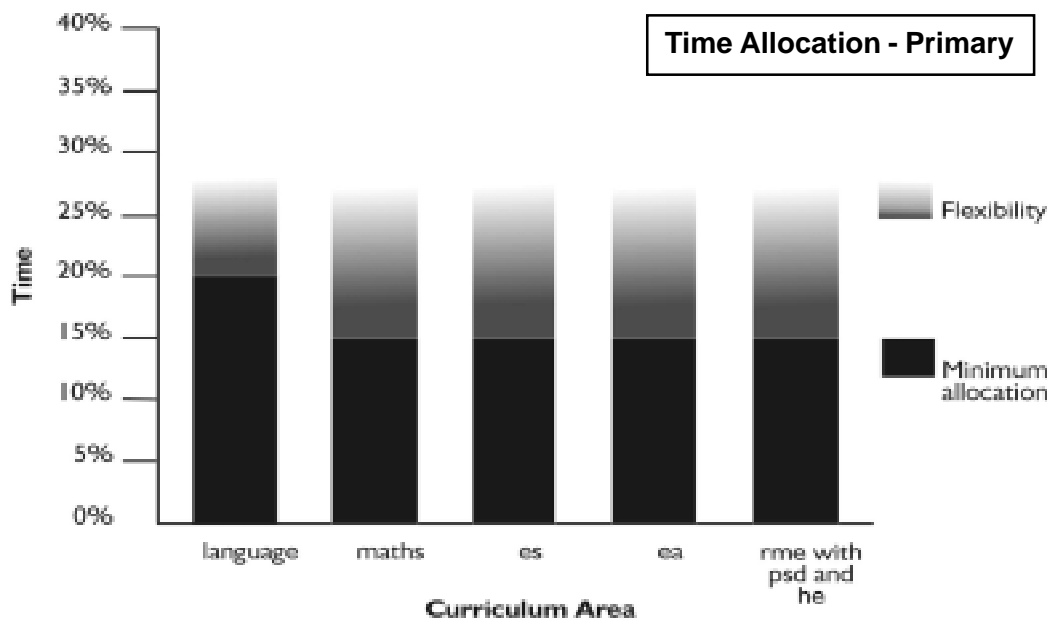
Flexibility - a local resource

The flexible use of the remaining time [20%] should be based on the needs of pupils and the development priorities of the school and the authority. Decisions about its use should derive from initiatives to raise standards of attainment, strengthen learning and teaching and be an integral part of a school's self-evaluation procedures.

Key Points
NG 3.5 – 3.15

Staff development
GTM P19 – 25

Exemplification
GTM P29 - 42



Percentages into hours and minutes

Schools find it helpful to convert percentages into a figure of hours and minutes. At the P1-2 stage, 1 hour is roughly equivalent to 5%, and at P3-7 1 hour is roughly equivalent to 4%. It is also recognised that in the course of a pupil day, time is given to necessary classroom management and administration matters. It is vital, however, that every effort is made to ensure that the maximum time for teaching is maintained.

Staff development
GTM P 24-25

Different time allocations at different stages.

For different purposes, different time allocations will be appropriate at different stages. For example, it is recognised that Early Intervention strategies have benefited from additional time for literacy and numeracy in P1-3. Similarly extra time will be required for language at P6-7 to include learning a foreign language and for Environmental Studies.

Different time allocations to meet specific priorities.

Across a school year, time allocation for a specific area may vary to allow a particular focus on developing pupil knowledge and skills. For example, raising attainment in writing across the whole school or at a particular stage may require an increased time allocation for a term or two. Focused use of time in this way can bring a real sense of progress and achievement. It is important for managers and teachers to ensure that such an emphasis does not unduly detract from pupils' overall experience in another area.

Key Point
Modern Languages
NG 3.15

Maintaining balance over a session.

Headteachers should monitor and periodically review the overall balance of attention to each curriculum area across the school. Teachers should look to maintain an overall balance, as agreed within the school, over a whole session.

Pupils with Special Educational needs

The above guidance is a helpful basis for planning and adapting individual programmes and support for pupils with special educational needs. IEPs and RONs should address matters relating to an appropriate balance of learning activities.

Variety of approaches to learning

Well planned programmes and effective teaching provide pupils with opportunities to learn in a variety of ways matched to the learning styles that best suit them.

Specific issue – ICT

ICT is a core skill that should be embedded across the whole curriculum. It is recognised however that sufficient time needs to be allocated to allow pupils to acquire and develop the skills in a planned and systematic manner as well as use them in topics and contexts in all the main curriculum areas. Many schools have established ICT bases where pupils go on a regular basis as a class to learn and practise their ICT skills. The allocation of time for this varies but often is between 3-4% of weekly time. Because the learning contexts cover different areas of the curriculum, it is recommended that ICT time be built into allocations for those areas.

Exemplification

NG 16-17
GTM 8-9

5 Continuity

The principle of continuity ensures that learning builds on pupils' experience and attainment and prepares them for further learning

Continuity in learning at all stages of 5-14

Key features of effective continuity in pupils' learning are

- Reviewing and consolidating prior learning and sharing what is to be learned
- Good feedback and assessment during and at the end of lessons and topics
- Sustaining appropriate intervention strategies to support learning
- Good planning which recognises what pupils already know and can do
- A positive ethos for learning
- Strong partnerships among teachers and between home and school

Continuity at transition

Pre-school into P1 and P7 into S1 are vital transition points. Good continuity is evident in

- Curriculum planning and programmes based on national guidelines
- Consistent expectations and approaches to learning and teaching
- Clear communication to support pupils and parents
- Clear arrangements for sharing information on pupil attainment

Key Points
RS 7.1, 7.2
NG 3.16 – 3.18

Staff development
GTM P 45 – 49

Exemplification
GTM P 6-7; 8-9;
12-15

6 Coherence

The principle of coherence requires the establishment of links across the various areas of learning so that pupils make connections between one area of knowledge and skills and another

Every opportunity should be sought to help pupils make connections in their learning. Where effective links are planned into programmes and activities, pupils can build their separate areas of knowledge and skill into a wider understanding of how the world works and of their place in it. Good teaching will draw such connections to pupils' attention and give them opportunities to use skills which have been acquired in other contexts. Where coherence is not built in, learning runs the risk of becoming fragmented. Grasping links does not always come quickly. In busy classrooms, pupils need time to reflect and make connections. Good teaching also retains the capacity for responding flexibly to incidental and unplanned learning that has engaged pupils' interest.

Key Points
NG 3.19 – 3.22

Exemplification
GTM P 8-9

7 Progression

The principle of progression provides pupils with a series of challenging but attainable tasks.

Good progress in pupils' learning is best secured through well planned programmes based on the framework of targets and levels in the 5-14 national guidelines. Schools should establish programmes for each curriculum area which offer a planned route through which pupils' learning and progress can be assessed.

Differentiated tasks and learning materials, a blend of teaching approaches, flexible groupings and good assessment are among the key ingredients of a curriculum through which high attainment can be achieved. Evidence from recent research highlights the benefit of direct interactive teaching which takes account of learning styles, including gender issues, offers high expectation, challenge and maintains a good pace. Regular evaluation of both learning and teaching provides a bridge into the next planning stage and so ensures that progression is maintained and that motivation and momentum are maintained.

Key Points

RS 7.1
NG 3.23 – 3.28

Staff development

GTM P45 -49

Exemplification

GTM P 6-15

8 Taking forward Structure and balance SABOC proposals

It is important that in each school, a process is established that allows the proposals contained in this paper to be discussed and implemented. This process will often be part of arrangements that are already established within the school and should include an opportunity for

- **Seeking agreement among staff about the implementation of the principles** eg about time allocations and in particular the flexible use of the 20% unallocated time. This can take place as part of the normal arrangements for:
 - ◆ agreeing curriculum priorities for the session,
 - ◆ reviewing the annual progress in priorities within the school development plan
 - ◆ reviewing curriculum programmes;
- **Monitoring implementation** eg ways in which time allocations are being used. This can be undertaken by teachers and managers as part of normal arrangements for:
 - ◆ monitoring learning and teaching,
 - ◆ supporting planning
 - ◆ allocating time for support for learning staff.
- **Evaluating the impact on pupil learning** eg the flexible use of time. This can be undertaken as part of the ongoing arrangements for:
 - ◆ monitoring pupil progress and reviewing overall attainment.

Key Points

RS 6.1 –6.5

Specific decisions about the implementation of the principles can be discussed at the annual school review.



9 Timescale for implementation

January 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SABOC paper issued to schools for consultation.
March/April 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SABOC consultation concluded and final paper issued to schools
May/June 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SABOC forms part of annual review of progress in school development plan [eg inset day 5];• Decisions re SABOC agreed with staff;
From session 2002 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SABOC principles implemented into all curriculum development initiatives;• SABOC review process implemented;• SABOC included in school review agenda