

NALDIC Response - August 2012

Consultation on Primary National Curriculum Draft Programmes of Study

NALDIC is a member of the Council for Subject Associations and supports the statement jointly submitted by CfSA, NUT, NASUWT and NAAE on all the draft programmes of study.

As the national subject association for English as an Additional Language (EAL) we have included some more detail on the implications of the framework focusing particularly on bilingual learners who now make up approximately one in six of the primary school population (DfE, 2012). We have included our more detailed comments in italics below

- Meeting children's needs - The proposed curriculum is over-prescriptive and leaves little or no room for teacher or school flexibility. Teachers will have little opportunity to create an appropriately tailored curriculum for each separate, inclusive class of pupils.
 - *EAL learners come to school with a range of language and learning needs. They will learn English in different ways and at different rates of progression. Such diversity in primary classrooms requires a more flexible approach to teaching English language and literacy than is evident in the proposed National Curriculum for primary English.*
 - *We are particularly concerned that the proposed NC English does not include an oracy strand. The fundamental importance of the development of spoken language for learners of EAL cannot be emphasised too highly. We all use spoken language to explore meaning, to express our ideas, opinions and feelings, to make sense of and confirm our understandings, to question and test our assumptions. At whatever age pupils begin to learn English in school, they need to learn quickly how to convey their knowledge and understanding in English and to engage with new learning through English. Developing speaking and listening skills in English is a key to success for all learners, but especially EAL learners.*
 - *Interacting with teachers and peers through the spoken language often provide contextual clues to the meanings in written texts; talk is a key enabling facility for learning to read and write for all pupils, particularly for those who are new to English.*
 - *Learning to read and write English increasingly also means learning to understand accompanying graphics and visuals in print and digital texts. The learning of EAL is likely to be enhanced by support to develop this knowledge and ability.*

- Breadth - With increased over-prescription and a focus on only three subjects we are concerned that breadth and balance in the curriculum will be lost.
 - *The language that learners need in order to develop their knowledge and understanding and participate fully in learning in classroom contexts is much more demanding and complex than simply 'subject' English. In classrooms, complex language is used for teaching purposes and pupils are expected to be able to use and reproduce a range of language forms and functions for different purposes. An understanding of subject specific vocabulary, sentence structures and text types will help but EAL learners also need to understand the different ways of constructing meaning in different contexts and curriculum subjects. The National Curriculum for primary English would seem to present a very particular view of language that does not incorporate or make reference to the range of literacies children now encounter in their lives.*

- Deep understanding - The draft programmes of study may well place too great an emphasis on rote learning. This means that children will be required to memorise information but not necessarily to understand it or think for themselves.
 - *As has been noted in the phonics progress check, the ability to decode is a skill which many EAL learners develop rapidly, but evidence suggests this is often not accompanied by the comprehension skills necessary for achievement within the educational system. We are pleased therefore to see word reading and comprehension, and similarly transcription, and composition within the framework. Care must be taken to ensure that the teaching of specific aspects of grammar, punctuation and spelling forefronted in the draft NC English framework does not displace activities which support the holistic communicative language and literacy development of bilingual pupils in English and across the curriculum.*

- Trust – Teachers must be trusted and allowed to use their professional judgement and experience to teach children.
 - *With regard to EAL, new teachers often comment that they feel unprepared for the teaching of EAL learners in their classrooms. Part of this arises from the limited opportunities in their initial teacher training, but also from teachers' relatively limited knowledge of language and of teaching about language. Notwithstanding the need to include much more about the language learning needs of EAL learners, the proposed National Curriculum for English will require the development of appropriate training for teachers as well as teaching resources, so that teachers are much better informed and more confident in their knowledge and understanding about language and language learning.*

We therefore call on the Government to:

- revise the draft programmes of study very significantly, especially to reduce the detailed content to be covered, before moving to the formal consultation stage;
- consult with a range of academic experts and teachers in a variety of schools as to what can realistically be expected of children at particular ages;
- include a clear oracy strand within the English curriculum and reinstate drama to the English curriculum as it plays such a key role in enhancing children's language skills and confidence;
- place a strong emphasis on reading for meaning and pleasure and writing for a variety of purposes; and
- place a stronger emphasis on ensuring that the revised National Curriculum fully considers the diversity of pupils' language and learning backgrounds which is a key feature of classrooms today