

Building L010
University of Reading
London Road
READING
RG1 5AQ

The **National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum** (NALDIC, website at naldic.org.uk) is the Professional Association for those working with and for children who are learning English as an additional language in the UK. It is a registered charity and provides professional support and resources to those working in education. NALDIC has discussed the Primary Curriculum Review consultation documents, and our response is detailed below.

Contacts:

Helen Abji (Secretary, NALDIC)
NALDIC
University of Reading
Building L10
London Road
Reading RG1 5AQ
Tel: 0118 986 9040
Fax: 0118 931 1074
enquiries@naldic.org.uk

Nicola Davies (Chair, NALDIC)
University of Reading
Building L10
London Road
Reading RG1 5AQ
Tel: 0118 986 9040
Fax: 0118 931 1074
enquiries@naldic.org.uk

NALDIC members welcome the bringing together of *Understanding, English, communication and languages* into one area with a particular focus on the development of spoken language. However, NALDIC is concerned that the distinctive needs and opportunities for bilingual learners of English are insufficiently taken account of by the Review. NALDIC believes these issues can be addressed at least initially by making some changes in wording, which would then need to be taken account of to ensure effective interpretation and implementation. Suggested changes are indicated in **red** throughout.

One issue in the area document is that the word *language* is used in a way which might imply that it always means *English*. This is undesirable and in contradiction to other policy statements on the role and value of first language development. As such it has the potential to devalue the language skills and potential of children whose first language is not English. We suggest the following changes:

- In the second line of *Why is this area of learning important* (Page 1): We suggest amending to ‘Children develop the ability to communicate effectively and use **their home** language in order to make meaning explicit for themselves and others. **In school**, meeting, creating and responding to all kinds of **English language** texts, including those that combine...’.
- In *Breadth of learning* (page 3 of 9), item d, line 2: we suggest ‘They should look at the patterns, structures and origins of **English and other** languages...’.
- *Curriculum progression, Languages*: It would be more appropriate to term this ‘**Taught Languages**’ (as distinct from community languages, which may or may not be taught in school).

To encourage teachers to take advantage of the range of languages available in their classrooms in this area of learning, we believe that it is vital to stress the possibilities of comparing English and other languages, and of analysing the language in written texts.

- In the last line of *Why is this area of learning important* (Page 1), we suggest amending to ‘...and further develops their understanding of how **English and other** languages work’.
- In *Curriculum progression, Languages* (page 7): there is an obvious opportunity to include an item in both the Middle column and the Later column to develop students’ ability ‘**to compare how English and other languages work in terms of grammar and vocabulary**’.

There are two items that give a misleading picture of the study of language features:

- In *Curriculum progression, English and communication - reading* (page 5), item E10 would be greatly improved if it read, ‘simple grammar, including how word order **and word structure** affect meaning in English’. *Word order* (which linguists generally refer to as *syntax*) and *word structure* (which linguists generally refer to as *morphology*, e.g. plural endings, third person -s, etc.) work together to signal the grammar of a language. There is strong evidence that awareness of morphology can help children to read better and that bilingual students often greater metalinguistic awareness than their monolingual peers.
- In *Curriculum progression, Languages - intercultural understanding* (page 8), Middle level, M40, ‘to recognise that languages have words and features in common as well as differences’ might be more suitably located in *Languages - speaking and listening and/or Languages - reading and writing*.

In *Curriculum progression, Languages - reading and writing* (page 7), Later level, there is the aim ‘to read aloud with expression and accuracy’. All the research in this area suggests that reading aloud does not contribute to second language accuracy, fluency or complexity, and it is often demotivating for young learners. For learners of English as an additional language it might be doubly inappropriate. We would strongly advise that this item be deleted from the curriculum progression or at least modified to provide guidance as to situations and types of students when it might actually do more harm than good!

There is a comment in the explanatory text on page 3 that refers to ‘the patterns, structures and origins of languages’, that says ‘Including different forms of communication, including sign languages’. This appears to suggest that sign languages are not ‘languages’, but merely ‘different forms of communication’: this is inaccurate and potentially discriminatory against deaf students. We recommend combining notes 10 and 11, to read, ‘This **may be one language or more, including sign languages**’.

NALDIC is strongly of the view that without an assessment system that reflects the distinctive development and needs of bilingual learners there will be little progress as the curriculum will continue to develop in ways that are less effective and accessible to them. We would argue that Recommendation 8 iii be adapted to reflect this fact and include specific reference to the particular needs of learners of English as an additional language.

NALDIC is disappointed to discover that in spite of the research evidence presented to the Committee on the inappropriateness of undue emphasis on a phonics based approach for children learning English as an additional language this is the only approach that is recommended. Teachers will undoubtedly continue to recognise that phonic awareness is a necessary but not sufficient skill learning how to read and will continue to equip their students with a broad range of strategies. It is unfortunate the Review has not supported them in this.

NALDIC is concerned that whilst Recommendation 23 has the laudable aim of ensuring curriculum continuity in the learning of languages, this might hamper the development of home languages in Primary Schools. There is strong research evidence to suggest that bilingual learners are best served cognitively by developing all their languages for as long as possible. This should be of greater importance, in our view, than having had some early introduction to French, German, or Spanish, which, unfortunately at the moment, continue to be the predominant languages available at Key Stage 3.