

POST-PRIMARY

# QUICK GUIDE TO THE CURRICULUM

*What To Expect When Your Child  
Starts Post-Primary School*



*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.*



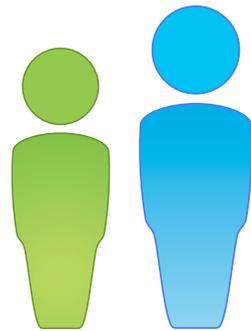
## POST-PRIMARY QUICK GUIDE TO THE CURRICULUM

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](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk)



# The Stages



Your child's time at post-primary school is divided into two Key Stages:

- At Key Stage 3 (Years 8–10), your child will learn about a broad range of subjects to prepare them as well as possible for future choices in life.
- At Key Stage 4 (Years 11 and 12), your child will be able to choose from a range of courses and qualifications to follow the best route for them.

# The Subjects

There are many familiar faces in the curriculum, and pupils 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 subjects relate to one another. For example, the Environment and Society Area of Learning brings together geography and history.

There is also a new Area of Learning called Learning for Life and Work (LLW). It's designed to prepare your child for adulthood by giving them the understanding and skills they'll need to live and work in society.

This groups the curriculum's newest subjects:

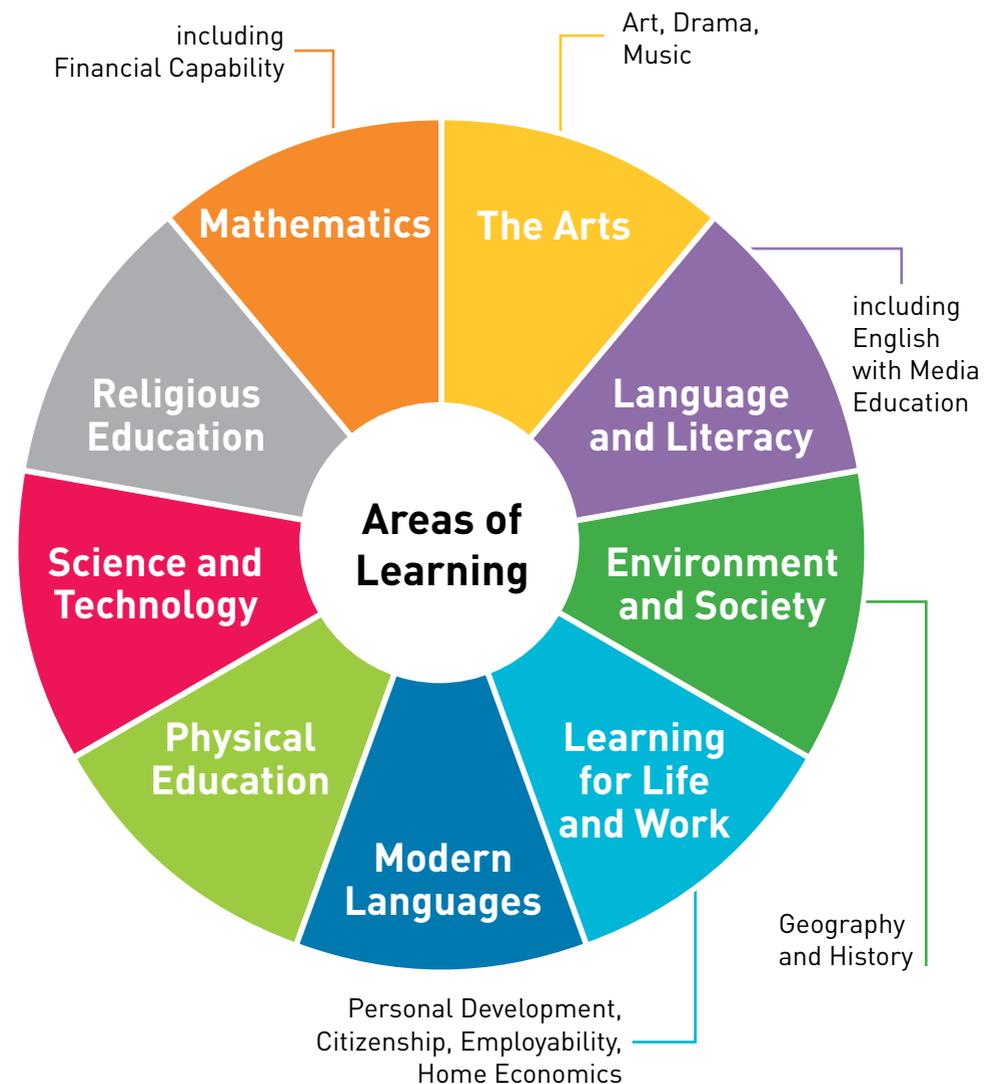
- Personal Development
- Local and Global Citizenship
- Education for Employability.

For Years 8–10, it also includes Home Economics – a subject that has been part of the curriculum for a long time but is only now a requirement for all pupils.

Your child will still learn the essential knowledge and skills for each Area

of Learning and the subjects they contain, 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.

"I think citizenship is important because I now know more about treating people fairly and treating different races with respect."  
Pupil



# The Connections

Children learn best when learning is relevant and connected.

Where possible, teachers will encourage your child to practise and develop skills and to make connections across a number of subjects.

For example, a geography lesson on wind power might also connect to *science, technology and English* as the pupils design and build small scale, working, wind powered machines and discuss the issues involved.

Connected activities like this, where work on a topic draws on knowledge and skills pupils have developed in previous learning, allows 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.

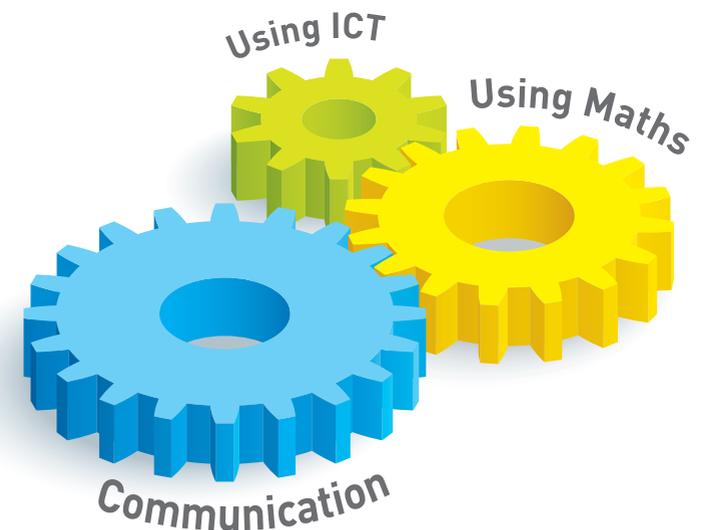


# The Skills to 'Do' well

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 to 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 subject.

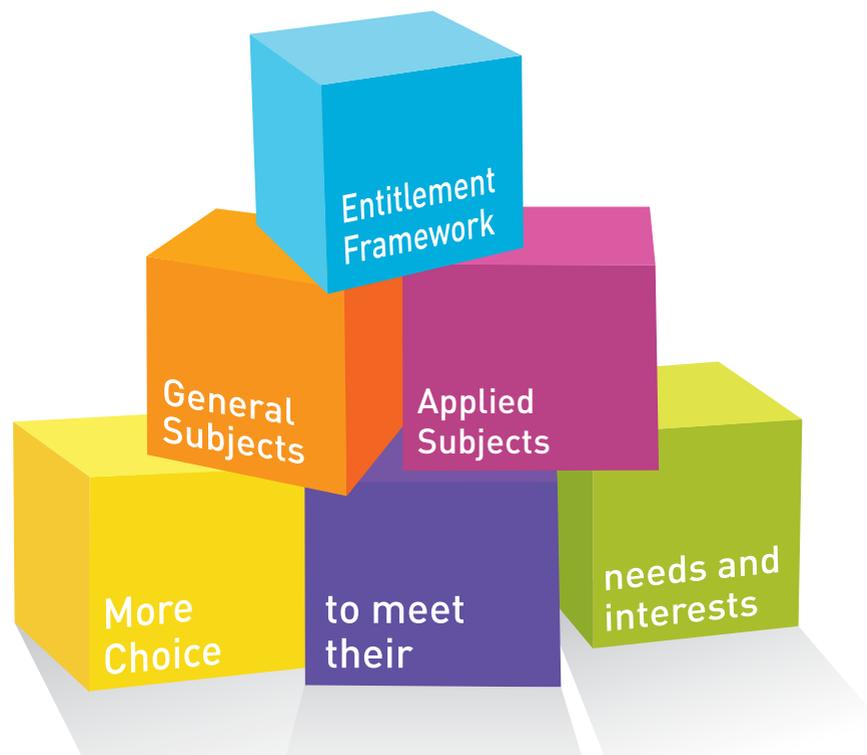


# The Courses/ Qualifications

The law now states that schools must offer your child a wide variety of qualifications.

This is known as the Entitlement Framework. By 2013, schools will offer a minimum of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 (Years 11–12) and a minimum of 27 courses at post-16 (Years 13–14). This means that your child will be able to choose from a range of general ('academic') courses, such as science

and history, and what are known as applied ('vocational') courses, such as engineering and financial capability. More choice will allow you and your child to select the blend of courses best suited to their specific interests and needs.



# 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:

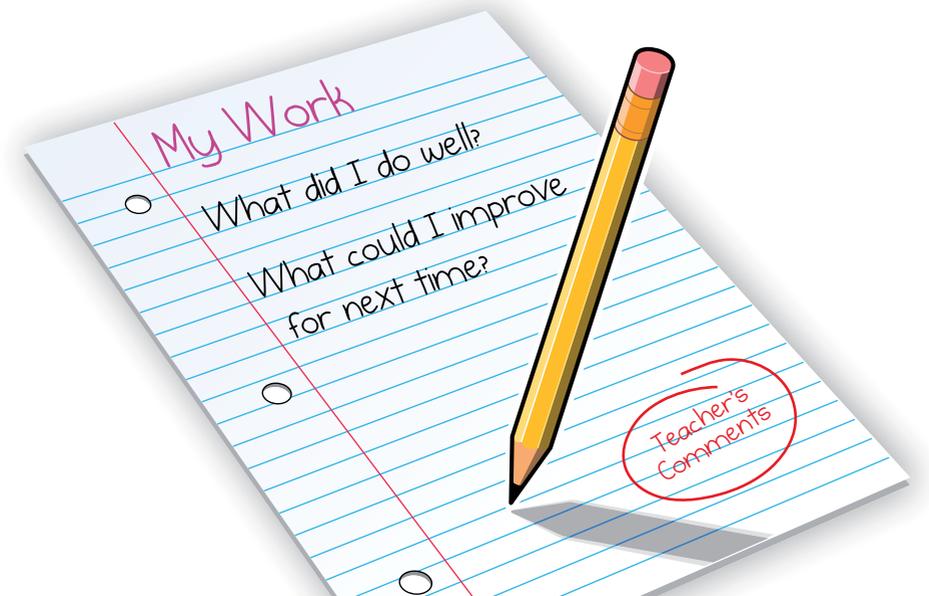
- What did I do well?
- What could I improve for next time?

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

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 love hearing what everyone thinks about my work"*

Pupil



# The Reporting

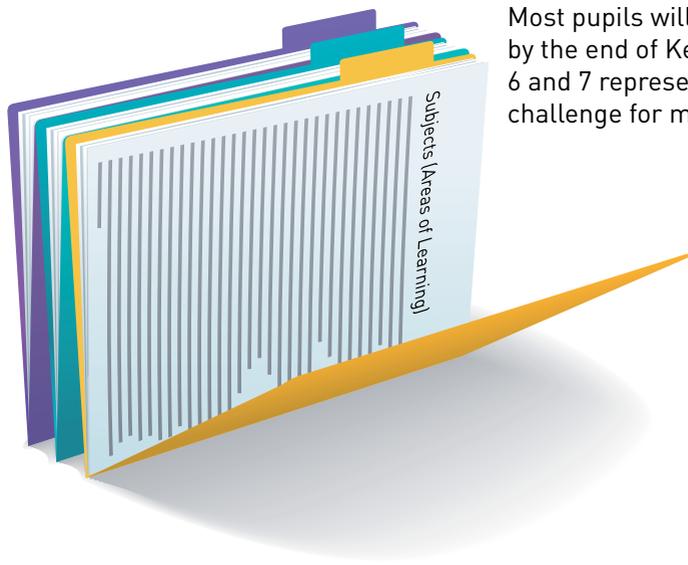
Your child's annual report will tell you about their learning and progress in a number of ways.

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

- the subjects (Areas of Learning);
- the Cross-Curricular Skills;
- the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities; and
- any qualifications they're taking (Years 11 and 12 only).

In Year 10 (at the end of Key Stage 3), 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 in their annual report. As a pupil moves through post-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 5 by the end of Key Stage 3, with levels 6 and 7 representing stretch and challenge for more able pupils.



# 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](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk)

The Department of Education  
Northern Ireland  
[www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)



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