



Department
for Education

Consultation Response Form

Consultation closing date: 8 August 2013
Your comments must reach us by that date

**National curriculum review: new
programmes of study and attainment
targets from September 2014**

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: Andrew Copson	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of Organisation (if applicable): British Humanist Association	
Address: 39 Moreland Street London EC1V 8BB	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please mark the box that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Maintained primary school	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintained secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/> Special school
<input type="checkbox"/> Academy/free school	<input type="checkbox"/> Subject association	<input type="checkbox"/> Governing body
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Young person	<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Employer/business sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisation representing school children
<input type="checkbox"/> Organisation representing school teachers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please Specify: Religion or belief group

The British Humanist Association is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, support and represent the non-religious, and promote a secular state and equal treatment in law and policy of everyone, regardless of religion or belief.

Founded in 1896, we have around 30,000 members and supporters, and over 70 local and special interest affiliates. Our policies are informed with the support of over 120 of the UK's most prominent philosophers, scientists, and other thinkers and experts and we seek to advance them with the help of over 100 parliamentarians in membership of the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group. Our trained and accredited celebrants conduct funerals and other non-religious ceremonies attended by over 500,000 people each year.

Our recommendations

We have no comments on the draft order – our comments are instead focused on the proposed programmes of study. After seeking advice from the Department, we have chosen to largely focus on new matters arising following the latest set of revisions, but have also revisited previous points we made where we feel that those points are

particularly important.

Science – sex education: We welcome the addition of puberty, and the statement that ‘All state schools... must teach... sex and relationship education to pupils in secondary education.’ However, there still remain a number of serious omissions which will see pupils let down. Primary age pupils should understand the basics of anatomy and sexual reproduction, while secondary age pupils should continue to be taught about sexual health, contraception, pregnancy, STIs, HIV and AIDS – all things in the current curriculum but not the draft.

Science – evolution: We are deeply concerned that evolution has been pushed back from year four to year six, seemingly due to pressure by creationist religious groups. However, from a pedagogical point of view, we are on balance content with this change. We therefore want to urge only that evolution is not further pushed back.

Science – scientific method: We continue to be concerned that there is no mention of the nature of evidence, whether evidence is reliable and why it might not be, causation and correlation.

Citizenship: We strongly welcome the re-addition of human rights to the curriculum, although regret the continued exclusion of equalities and freedom of speech. We also reject the argument made in the Government’s equalities impact assessment about sexual identity and different family structures, and maintain that non-religious identities must be explicitly mentioned alongside religious identities.

History: We regret the removal of the paragraph on ‘the Windrush generation, wider new Commonwealth immigration, and the arrival of East African Asians; society and social reform, including the abolition of capital punishment, the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality, and the Race Relations Act’. We also continue to urge that the modern increase in non-religious beliefs and identities – such a vital and dramatic part of English history – should be taught about.

Our expertise in education

The BHA has a long history of work in education, children’s rights and equality, with expertise in the ‘religion or belief’ strand. We provide materials and advice to parents, governors, students, teachers and academics. We also work closely with others on wider equalities issues in a range of forums. The BHA is a member of the National Children’s Bureau Sex Education Forum (SEF), the Children’s Rights Alliance for England and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales.

As a source of advice: As an organisation supporting non-religious parents and young people, we have experience in the issues they face at school. In fact, the most frequent issue raised with the BHA is parents looking for support after distressing experiences related to Collective Worship, particularly in primary schools.

Involvement in RE and values education: We promote education being broad, balanced, objective, and humanistic in the widest sense of the term, and have a history of work in religious, moral and values education. The BHA was a co-founder in 1973 of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and in the 1990s of the Values Education Council of the UK. The latter ceased to exist in 2008, but our involvement in the REC continues today, with our current Chief Executive serving as a trustee and director since 2006. In addition BHA members locally are involved in about two-thirds of the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) in England and Wales, either as full members, co-opted members or observers.

Working across the religion or belief spectrum: The BHA is also an organisation committed to working with those of other beliefs for the common good in education. In the 1970s, years before the foundation of bodies such as the Inter-Faith Network, we were co-founders of the Standing Council on Inter-Faith Dialogue in Education (SCIFDE) together with Jews and Christians; along with religious believers, we were also co-founders of the Social Morality Council. Today, many BHA members work alongside those with different beliefs on their local SACRE or inter-faith forums. Many play an active part in the work of other organisations such as the 3FF, an organisation that provides speaker panels for schools with speakers from across the religion and belief spectrum.

Spiritual development: The BHA has extensive expertise in the area of ‘spiritual’ development for the non-religious. We also have a long history of involvement in the concept, which was arguably invented in 1961 by educationalist and future BHA President James Hemming and the philosopher Harold Blackham, later the first Executive Director of the BHA. At the BHA’s conference in 1969, the distinguished political theorist Sir Bernard Crick, future Vice President of the BHA, presented a paper in which he linked spiritual development and citizenship for the first time. Crick advocated the virtue of toleration in the ideal state, saying ‘the most important thing about living in any complex and reasonably civilized community is to perceive it is pluralistic.’ He also argued that young people should learn about the different beliefs which are common in society as part of the school curriculum, and that people of different beliefs could cooperate for the common good.

Humanists do not have a common position on the use of the term ‘spirituality’, but the BHA believes that where it is used, it should be used in a manner that is inclusive of the non-religious – as is the case in education.

Evolution and creationism: We co-ordinated the ‘Teach evolution, not creationism!’ campaign, which was also supported by organisations such as the Association for Science Education and the British Science Association, and by thirty leading scientists including Sir David Attenborough, Professor Colin Blakemore, Professor Richard Dawkins, Sir Paul Nurse and Revd Professor Michael Reiss. It was supported by an e-petition signed by almost 25,000 British citizens.¹

¹ ‘Teach evolution, not creationism’ Government e-petition: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/1617>

Previous consultation responses: We previously responded to the national curriculum review's call for evidence in April 2011,² the draft primary national curriculum for science in August 2012,³ and the draft programmes of study in April 2013,⁴ and will draw on those responses as appropriate in responding to this consultation.

BHA policy on education

We are interested in education for three reasons:

- we aim for the UK to be secular state with no privilege or discrimination on grounds of religion or belief. The continuing religious discrimination in our state school system is therefore a concern for us
- we aim for Humanism to be better understood as an ethical and fulfilling non-religious approach to life and so we have an interest in ensuring that it features on the school curriculum on equal terms with religions
- humanists see education as a vital process and have been rich contributors to both the philosophy and practice of education

We have an interest in promoting better education that will meet these aspirations because we promote humanist perspectives in public debate and policy.

We concentrate on laws and policies that we believe are discriminatory and violate principles of human rights or equality in state-funded schools or on matters where we have a distinctive humanist view. For example we work for progressive reform of the school curriculum and inclusive assemblies in place of mandatory religious worship.

One of our aims is to promote a humanist perspective on public policy issues. Many humanists have had a profound interest in education and so the school curriculum has naturally been a focus for us. In practice, we concentrate on aspects of the curriculum where the humanist voice is excluded or weak or where others are actively promoting policies at odds with our principles.

² *National Curriculum Review - Call for Evidence: Submission from the British Humanist Association (BHA)*, April 2011: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1bha-response-curriculum-review.pdf>

³ *Draft National Curriculum for science Key Stages 1-2: Response from the British Humanist Association (BHA)*, 15 August 2012: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/draft-national-curriculum-for-science-key-stages-1-2-response-from-the-bha.pdf>

⁴ *Reform of the National Curriculum in England: Consultation Response Form from the British Humanist Association*, 16 April 2013: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Reform-of-the-National-Curriculum-in-England-British-Humanist-Association-response.pdf>

1 Do you have any general comments on the draft Order?

Yes

No

Comments: Our comments are focused on the proposed programmes of study.

2 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for English?

Yes

No

Comments:

3 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for mathematics?

Yes

No

Comments:

4 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for science?

Yes

No

Comments: Our comments are split into three areas, namely sex education, evolution and the scientific method. As already stated, we have chosen to largely focus on new matters arising following the latest set of revisions, but have also revisited previous points (in particular with respect to sex education) we made where we feel that those points are particularly important.

Sex education

We are deeply concerned that the sex education sections of the science curriculum remain inadequate. To reproduce what we said in opening our previous response:

We believe that all children of all backgrounds are entitled to full, accurate and age-appropriate sex education, which should equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to prepare them for puberty, make informed decisions about relationships and to effectively safeguard children from sexual exploitation. At a primary age, this means educating younger children about different external body parts and what constitutes inappropriate touching on the part of adults. Older primary children should begin to learn about puberty and the basics of sexual reproduction. Reproduction should be covered in more depth in secondary schools and be joined by teaching about STIs, HIV and AIDS.

This material should also be covered in sex and relationships education (SRE). However, the outcome of the PSHE Review has been that no changes will be made to the statutory situation with regards to PSHE or SRE. So as a consequence, while secondary schools must teach about STIs, HIV and AIDS, there is no requirement to teach anything else outside of whatever is in national curriculum science. In particular, primary schools do not have to provide any SRE at all. Furthermore, parents can legally opt out their children from any education which is provided, denying pupils this vital knowledge where it is taught. As a result, SRE cannot be relied upon to provide the knowledge that children need and are entitled to in this area, and so there must be strong coverage as part of the science curriculum.

The reason we think the above aspects of sex education should be included in science is because the evidence shows that that is what leads to the best outcomes for children.⁵

However, we also said that:

we are concerned that the lobbying of unrepresentative, ideologically driven pressure groups such as the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), Lovewise and LIFE has had an undue influence on the drafting of the science national curriculum. Conversely, UNESCO's 2009 report, 'International

⁵ See, for example, *Does sex and relationships education work? A Sex Education Forum evidence briefing*: http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/494585/sef_doessrework_2010.pdf

Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An evidence-informed approach for schools, teachers and health educators' recommends that the topics of sexual and reproductive anatomy, reproduction, puberty, privacy and bodily integrity are covered from ages 5-8.⁶

On science, in its equalities impact assessment,⁷ the Government comments:

Representatives of some religious groups expressed concerns over aspects of the prescribed content which run counter to the core beliefs of their communities – chiefly the inclusion of evolution and sexual reproduction in key stage 2. It was argued that sex education should be included in PSHE only, to preserve the right of parents to withdraw their children from those lessons. Other stakeholders were critical of the focus on sexual activity being only on the context of reproduction (thereby excluding gay pupils) and was suggested that same-sex relationships should be specified as part of the theme of human reproduction in key stage 3.

...On same-sex relationships, our view is that it is most appropriate for schools to cover this topic as part of PSHE education, where it can be adapted more effectively to suit the needs of particular groups of pupils.

It is very concerning that our fears might have been realised, namely that the opposition of religious groups representing a narrow portion of the population appears to be having an undue influence. There is strong support for teaching comprehensive sex education in schools – for example, a survey carried out in May found that 88 per cent of parents think that 'sex education and lessons in adult and/or peer to peer relationships' should 'be mandatory in schools'.⁸

We fear that 'where it can be adapted more effectively to suit the needs of particular groups of pupils' is a euphemism for allowing same-sex relationships to be taught by 'faith' schools in manners which is discriminatory against LGBT pupils in denying them equal treatment or access to knowledge. If this is the case, then the opposition expressed should not be given much weight, while the concerns given about the lack of teaching seem legitimate, not least given the continued un-compulsory nature of PSHE.

Turning to specific issues:

- We previously argued that for safeguarding purposes, pupils in Key Stage 1 should learn the names of the penis, breasts and vulva/vagina when they are taught the names of other body parts. This suggestion has not been acted upon.
- We welcome the fact that the year six section on reproduction has been brought

⁶ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf> – see Key Concept 4

⁷ *Reform of the national curriculum in England Equalities impact assessment*, July 2013: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/211061/Equalities_impact_assessment_-_FINAL_v3.pdf

⁸ *Parents want schools to manage dangers of pornography, says NAHT survey*, 14 May 2013: <http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/parents-want-schools-to-manage-dangers-of-pornography-says-survey/>

forward to year five, which seems to be a more appropriate age. However, we are concerned that the statement 'including humans' which was in the (now omitted) year five section no longer appears in either year five or six. Primary schools can teach the national curriculum without teaching human sexual reproduction, conception or birth, and this seems to us to be a step back.

- A very positive change is the re-inclusion of puberty in year five. We were deeply concerned to see that it was not mentioned at all in the previous draft, despite being in the old curriculum, and are happy that it is reinstated.
- The statement 'without details of hormones' still appears in key stage 3, and there is still no mention anywhere of sexual intercourse, sexual health, contraception, pregnancy, STIs, HIV and AIDS – all of which were mentioned in the current programmes of study (and in the case of STIs, HIV and AIDS, are statutorily required to be taught about). These urgently need adding back in.

While not related specifically to science, we finally welcome the new statement in paragraphs 2.3 and 3.6 that 'All state schools... must teach... sex and relationship education to pupils in secondary education.'

Evolution

In our previous response we welcomed the fact that modules on evolution had been added to the years four and six national curriculum, representing the first time that evolution would be taught in primary schools.

The change made in the latest draft is that the content that was in the module in year four has been moved into the (consequentially expanded) year six module. In the equalities impact assessment, the Government said:

Representatives of some religious groups expressed concerns over aspects of the prescribed content which run counter to the core beliefs of their communities – chiefly the inclusion of evolution and sexual reproduction in key stage 2...

We share the view of the scientific community that evolution is one of the fundamental strands of knowledge in biology. Leading scientists regard it as highly appropriate to include the subject in the primary science curriculum, and there are examples of other high-performing educational jurisdictions (e.g. Massachusetts) that introduce the subject at the equivalent of key stage 2.

Given this, other sources of information and conversations had with civil servants, we are deeply concerned that evolution has been pushed back from year four to year six because of the concern of creationists. The Government itself recognises that evolution is a strongly evidenced theory, while creationism and intelligent design are not, so for the Government to listen to those who hold what it considers to be pseudoscientific views is illogical and deeply regrettable.

With that said, since the initial announcement of this change we have taken the time to

consult with scientific and educational experts on when they think evolution should first be taught, and we are content that while the change of year may be wrongly motivated, from an educational point of view year six is still an appropriate age to first cover this topic. Therefore we would simply urge the Government to not move evolution back any further from year six.

Scientific method

In our previous response, we said that 'we are concerned that the “Working scientifically” sections do not sufficiently explore why the scientific method works, in addition to how they work. This should include the nature of evidence, whether evidence is reliable and why it might not be, causation and correlation. Further exploration of why it works would be welcome.' There does not seem to be any improvement on this front and we would reiterate the need for a strong education in the scientific method so that individuals are better prepared to critically assess claims they may encounter in daily life.

5 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for art and design?

Yes

No

Comments:

6 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for citizenship?

Yes No

Comments:

Human rights: The previous draft programme of study proposed to delete the extensive references to human rights found in the current national curriculum (including a full definition). The latest draft includes 'Pupils should be taught about human rights and international law'. Therefore, while this is still a big step back from what is currently in place, human rights' re-inclusion is seriously positive, and to be welcomed.

However, we are concerned about the continuing omission of any mention of equalities and freedom of speech, two other important concepts that are in the current curriculum.

Sexual orientation: In the equalities impact assessment, the Government say

The requirement for pupils to be taught about 'the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding' has been welcomed by citizenship educators. Some consultation respondents argued that this should be extended to include people of different sexual identity and different family structures...

... It is our view that schools should continue to address different sexual identities and family structures as part of PSHE education, where it can more effectively be adapted to suit the needs of particular groups of pupils, rather than as part of the statutory citizenship curriculum.

We fear that 'where it can be adapted more effectively to suit the needs of particular groups of pupils' is a euphemism for allowing same-sex relationships to be taught by 'faith' schools in manners which is discriminatory against LGBT pupils in denying them equal treatment or access to knowledge. If this is the case, then the opposition expressed should not be given much weight, while the concerns given about the lack of teaching seem legitimate, not least given the continued un-compulsory nature of PSHE.

Non-religious identities: In our previous response, we said:

Key Stage 4 citizenship says that 'Pupils should be taught about diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.' This should also refer to non-religious identities.

The latest Census recorded 25% of the population of England and Wales as having no religion,⁹ while the most recent *British Social Attitudes Survey* found that 46% of the public does not belong to a religion.¹⁰ Focussing on young people specifically, the 2010 *British Social Attitudes Survey* (the most recent to segregate by age) records 65% of 18-24 year olds as not belonging to any religion.¹¹ Meanwhile, the 2003 Citizenship Survey found 46% of 11-15 year olds not having a religion,¹² while a 2004 Department for Education report found 65% of 12-19 year olds are not religious.¹³

These comments remain applicable.

7 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for computing?

Yes

No

⁹ Office for National Statistics, 'Religion in England and Wales 2011', 11 December 2011: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html>

¹⁰ NatCen Social Research, 29th British Social Attitudes Survey: <http://bsa-29.natcen.ac.uk/>

¹¹ 28th British Social Attitudes Survey – see page 195: http://ir2.flife.de/data/natcen-social-research/igb_html/index.php?bericht_id=1000001&index=&lang=ENG

¹² Christine Farmer, '2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: Top-level findings from the Children's and Young People's Survey' (Home Office and Department for Education and Skills, 2005), p. 37: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452490.pdf>

¹³ Alison Park, Miranda Phillips and Mark Johnson, 'Young People in Britain: The Attitudes and Experiences of 12 to 19 Year Olds' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004), pp. 10-11: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR564.pdf.pdf>

Comments:

8 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for design and technology?

Yes

No

Comments:

9 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for geography?

Yes

No

Comments:

10 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for history?

Yes

No

Comments: We note that there are now extensive references to the impact of Christianity and the Church in Britain. We think that the very large recent demographic shift towards having no religion should also be included, given its significant magnitude and the fact that it represents the majority of young people (as per our response to the citizenship question).

We note that previously there was mention of 'the Windrush generation, wider new Commonwealth immigration, and the arrival of East African Asians; society and social reform, including the abolition of capital punishment, the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality, and the Race Relations Act'. This is all gone and replaced with 'social, cultural and technological change in post-war British society' and 'a study of an aspect of social history, such as the impact through time of the migration of people to, from and within the British Isles'. The Government justified this by saying:

The programmes of study have also been revised to reduce the level of prescription. In doing so, however, it has been necessary to remove some of the content that featured in the February draft... It has also meant removing specific references to certain pieces of equalities legislation (e.g. the legalisation of homosexuality) on which equalities organisations commented positively in the statutory consultation. Whilst we recognise that these changes are likely to provoke concern among certain groups, we believe that strong concerns raised about the over-prescriptive nature of the draft programmes of study mean that this has been a necessary step in producing a curriculum that can and will be taught. It will remain open to schools to choose which particular

individuals they teach pupils about, both as part of delivering the prescribed content of the national curriculum and as part of their wider school curriculum.

We do not think this justification is sufficient to offset the serious social and moral significance of the changes that were mentioned, and urge the re-inclusion of the relevant bullet point.

11 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for languages?

Yes

No

Comments:

12 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for music?

Yes

No

Comments:

13 Do you have any comments on the revised draft programmes of study or attainment targets for physical education?

Yes

No

Comments:

14 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand, complete etc.).

Comments: No comment.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply.

E-mail address for acknowledgement:

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key consultation principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected

- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 8 August 2013

Send by post to: Carole Edge, Department for Education, Area 1C Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2 GJ

Send by e-mail to: NCRlegislative.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk