CURRICULUM DESIGN

DISCIPLINED INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

The Futures Vision Group, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
Curriculum design: disciplined innovation in practice

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Acknowledgements
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Editor
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**Mission of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust**
The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust works to give practical support to the transformation of secondary education in England by building and enabling a world-class network of innovative, high performing secondary schools in partnership with business and the wider community.

**This publication Audience**
Leaders and staff in schools implementing the new secondary curriculum

**Aim**
To give examples of disciplined innovation in curriculum based on practice in a number of schools, as a source of ideas and a stimulus for discussion and debate.
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Curriculum design goes to the heart of changing our schools. In *Essential Questions for the Future School* (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, 2006) we asked ‘why does the UK curriculum, despite all the reform and innovation, still look very similar to that on offer at the start of the 1900s?’ In this publication, we have tried to capture some of the ways in which schools are starting to create their own futures by designing something different.

We are heartened by the QCA review of the secondary curriculum, which encourages schools to grasp the moment and start to ‘build their own curriculum that reflects their local context and meets their learners’ needs, capabilities and aspirations.’ (QCA website 2008).

The challenge as we see it is to design a curriculum that matches these aspirations. It isn’t hard to fully support the values. But as a network of schools, are we ready to be both innovative in using the flexibility on offer, and disciplined enough to ensure that we continue to meet our learners’ needs and personalise learning? Can we personalise learning, as well as raising standards?

Futures Vision is a think tank within the SSAT. Originally known as Vision 2020, under which guise we published *One World: One School* (SSAT 2000), we have evolved into a wider network. It now includes a number of the curriculum design Lead Practitioners working with us to consider examples from schools across England that have sought to be both innovative and disciplined in their curriculum design.

This publication is a summary of our findings. Importantly it is not a booklet of ideas people might like to try in the future, nor is it a set of questions or a series of blueprints on ‘how to do curriculum design’. In this booklet we’ve tried to share both the practical things people have done and their effect, and some of the common themes and ideas that run between them. The process of sharing new designs has demonstrated that although each school needs to reflect the local context for its own learners, there is a tremendous amount we can learn from each other.

We plan to continue expanding the membership of Futures Vision to include schools willing to share their ideas and the story of what happened when they put those ideas into practice. If you would be interested in joining us in that work, please contact me at: futuresvision@ssatrust.org.uk

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1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The introduction of the new secondary curriculum asks schools to reflect on the learning outcomes for young people through the whole curriculum experience. They are expected to develop a local curriculum through a process of disciplined innovation engaging the whole school community.

There are three key questions for schools in this process:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- How do we organise learning?
- How well are we achieving our aims?

This publication forms part of a programme of support for curriculum designers in schools to help them meet this challenge. The programme offers opportunities for a wide variety of schools to share their stories about what they want to achieve, the strategies they are using to achieve their aims and relating those stories and strategies to their impact on learning. The 2007 publication Curriculum Design: Introductory Guide presented an overview of practice in a variety of school contexts. This document presents snapshots of practice in a number of schools and their own commentary and discussion on the issues that they face. It should be viewed as both a source of ideas and a stimulus for discussion and debate.

We believe that schools are not presented with the simple choice of whether to work in a disciplined way to raise standards or to innovate in their curriculum design. Rather we believe that disciplined innovation – in which schools learn from their own experiences and their peers’, validated by rigorous evaluation – is the best way to meet the needs of learners, raise standards and produce a genuinely world class curriculum.

Audience

- Regional leads, SSAT Lead Practitioners and other professionals supporting the whole curriculum design strand of work within the programme to support implementation of the new secondary curriculum
- Headteachers and curriculum designers engaged in whole school curriculum planning, timetable construction and leading learning
- Staff in schools with an interest in the development and implementation of an appropriate whole school curriculum for the 21st century.
The national programme of support for curriculum design

SSAT works very closely with a number of national partners to offer a coherent flow of support for schools as they respond to the challenges and opportunities in the new secondary curriculum and 14–19 reforms.

Support for school leaders in managing the change process (National College of School Leadership and Specialist Schools)

Support for curriculum leaders as they develop designs (SSAT)

Support for subject leads (National Strategies and CFBT Trust)

This booklet follows the publication in 2007 of Curriculum Design: Introductory Guide. That guide and accompanying CD-ROM forms part of the comprehensive programme of practical support and guidance that began in the summer of 2007 to help schools implement the new secondary curriculum from September 2008, at a rate of development which is right for each school.

In summer 2007 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) hosted regional workshops for local authorities, key partner agencies and school curriculum managers to share the findings from the national consultation, show what is changing in the secondary curriculum and explain why those changes are being made. The workshops were designed to help participants start thinking about how they can make the most of the opportunities offered by the new secondary curriculum.

Early in the autumn term of 2007 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) hosted the ‘Choice and Design’ national conferences for local authorities, headteachers and curriculum leaders that explained how the secondary curriculum changes fit into the context of the wider 11–19 reform programme.

Curriculum Design: Introductory Guide supported a series of regional workshops offered by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) and SSAT to give headteachers and their curriculum designers opportunities to discuss the implications of the new secondary curriculum and share innovative practice.

It was also part of the work of the SSAT in building a network of curriculum design Lead Practitioners and developing a resource pack of measures that schools could adapt to reflect their own context and audiences. The Lead Practitioners continue to offer local workshops for experienced and next generation curriculum designers. Local curriculum design groups are able to share developing practice in curriculum design through the SSAT’s website www.ssatrust.org.uk/curriculumdesign

The National Strategies (NS) body has included subject level advice for English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology in its regular programme of subject leader development meetings. Local authority strategy managers and consultants have been trained to give practical support and guidance to school strategy managers and subject leaders, and from April 2008 they have been available to work with specific schools on supporting subject leaders in the context of the new curriculum. In May 2008 the NS launched a new website containing online resources and materials linked to renewed frameworks for the selected subjects.

Teachers of foundation subjects are being supported by the CfBT Education Trust (CfBT) and national subject associations who developed training materials and led regional briefing events. Resources are now available online.
Practitioners involved in delivering the new Diplomas will have three days of SSAT/Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) diploma-specific training over six month period. This training is supported by materials and a dedicated virtual learning environment. Lead Diploma Practitioners will offer ongoing peer support in each line of learning. This will be complemented by the support offered to practitioners by awarding bodies and other strands of workforce support offered by national partners.

We would continue to strongly encourage and invite the reader to engage in the national programme of support, not as a passive recipient, but as an active member of a learning community of curriculum designers responding to a significant challenge in both an innovative and disciplined way.

No one school is likely to have the creative capital to solve all these design issues alone, nor should it necessarily engage in such an intrinsically risky enterprise without critical challenge and support from colleagues. Working together as a network, schools have the capacity to respond with curriculum designs that demonstrate disciplined innovation and provide the right challenges, experiences and progression routes for learners that are workable, cost effective and highly engaging for all.

It is in that spirit that this publication has been produced.

On the 27 February 2008, the Futures Vision welcomed 63 colleagues from schools and other educational organisations to a think tank in which to share their current practice, the issues that face them in improving their curriculum design, and what they see as the ways forward. The notes and presentations from the day were posted to a wiki online and all the contributors were able to work together to produce the basis for this publication.

Inevitably the event, and therefore this publication, focused more on the second of the three key questions used in the review of the national curriculum:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- How do we organise learning?
- How well are we achieving our aims?

The starting point for much of the discussions on the day were two SSAT publications:

- **System Redesign 3: Curriculum Redesign** by Guy Shearer, Kai Vacher and David Hargreaves
- **Essential Questions for the Future School** by the Futures Vision group

Each school present made a short presentation within their working group and worked to share both some good illustrations of the ideas in the system to improve curriculum design and to scrutinise and analyse them. This booklet is a summary of the common themes that arose from the working groups and the observations made, and we hope enough snapshots of work from across the country to put everything into a useful context. A fuller version of the information presented by each school is presented as the Appendix to this publication.
Using this publication

Our curriculum design resources are not intended for use in isolation. Inevitably there is considerable overlap between thinking about the change management in curriculum redesign and the development of improved curriculum models and systems, so this publication will be as relevant to the support programme from NCSL as it is to the SSAT events.

In particular the support being offered for subject leaders by CfBT and NS and for the development of the new Diplomas by SSAT, QIA and national partners continue to have important implications for the curriculum design team as does of course the web based resources provided by the QCA. Links to useful resources are included at the end of this guide.

This booklet is broken into three broad areas:

• Leading curriculum change – and importantly, creating and sustaining a culture in which disciplined innovation can occur

• Designing a curriculum that fully integrates personal learning and thinking skills, recognising that there are various approaches and that there is an impact on the way subjects are presented and led within the curriculum that needs to be considered

• Reconfiguring the organisation of systems and structures at school that have a huge impact on the success of the curriculum. This encompasses redesign in areas like lesson length, grouping of learners, leadership and management structures and the school calendar.

Within each area we present the commentary from schools on the issues they face as well as extracts from some of the presentations from them on their current practice, its impact and the changes they plan to implement in the near future. Fuller descriptions of the curriculum designs in these schools can be found in the appendix.

Accompanying this booklet is a DVD with interview footage from some of the contributors talking about the development of the curriculum in their own school and the wider issues involved.
The schools involved in writing this publication had a variety of reasons for making major changes to the way their curricula were structured. These included engagement, raising standards, adapting to new opportunities and responding to national changes. Although they expressed their reasons in a range of ways and the priorities and needs varied considerably from context to context they all had one factor in common – changing the design of the curriculum to alter the default settings for each and every learning experience in their school.

The notion of default settings has been written about extensively in a number of other SSAT publications (in particular see System Redesign – 3) and has proven a useful point for discussion at events. As far as we’re aware Sir Dexter Hutt, executive headteacher of the Ninestiles Federation, first used the term, to describe the everyday behaviours, attitudes and processes in a school. Each institution has certain norms that people adopt without thinking – the typical pattern of a lesson, the first choice type of activity, the way learners will typically react to certain situations. Curriculum design is one tool available to school leaders to change those defaults to bring about improvement. Simple alterations to the length of lessons, for example, can render some behaviours much more difficult and others easier, and so over time lead to change.

A school might choose to implement the new secondary curriculum and the 14–19 reforms in such a way as to fit within existing defaults as a strategy to support staff and reduce resistance to change. We suggest that this approach loses a major opportunity to engage learners and raise standards. None of the schools involved in this publication followed that route – in a variety of different ways they chose to use the way the curriculum is put together to change what school was like for some or all of their learners.
If the curriculum is the whole planned learning experience, then significant curriculum change will, by definition, have an impact on everyone working in a school.

Change on that scale includes an element of risk, a need to lead the school through a period of change that will not be universally popular and will be extended over a number of years and so require sustaining.

The schools at the think tank were all going through that process. None felt that they had ever ‘finished’ – indeed in many cases the leaders now sustaining and supporting further development were different from the ones that had initiated it.

Two main aspects emerged from our discussions:

- Recognising that much of the creative thinking to redesign the curriculum is inside school already, how can we create a culture to best nurture and support innovation, and how can we sustain it against all the other pressures that we face?

- Recognising that this isn’t a choice between innovation and raising standards, but rather working for both, how are we measuring the impact of changes and using that information to further improve and innovate?

Across all the Futures Vision schools there was wide agreement that curriculum design whilst it superficially might appear similar from school to school, needs to match local culture and context if it is to provide the best opportunities for learners, and that “one size does not fit all.” This applies very much to the way that each school finds to introduce a greater emphasis on personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) in their curriculum design. What works with one team of staff and their learners will not be the most effective solution with another. This message is wholly consistent with the thinking behind the new secondary curriculum.

Recognising also that each school’s starting point is imperfect we need to be both pragmatic and innovative in making the changes needed. This will apply to the systems and structures within each school and the environment in which they operate such as some qualifications and frameworks. For example skills based outcomes aren’t always as fully recognised within qualifications as we would like, however we are designing a curriculum for the assessment regime as it will be in 3–5 years in the future, not the one we had 3–5 years ago.

Some schools will find a tension between the need to improve their contextual value added scores and the need to be bold and get their curriculum right. A strategy some of the Futures Vision schools have used is to protect the core where assessment and accountability are felt most keenly and develop different patterns on special days or other parts of the curriculum. They argue that this isn’t coping out, it is recognising that until accountability changes to match the stated aims of the curriculum they feel they can only go so far.

Other schools reported that they chose their starting points based on where they will have the most measurable immediate gains, and by starting with the willing they can gain momentum for change and demonstrate the impact on standards.

Some schools such as Norham Community Technology College, Thomas Deacon Academy and Tonbridge Grammar School used pilots for curriculum development, either to demonstrate impact or because the development would in any case engage a particular group of learners so there was no issue of equity of access.
Initiating and sustaining innovation

While recognising that within all the stories of change we shared there was a huge variety of ideas and approaches, there were a number that many schools had in common. They can be grouped loosely under the headings below.

Accountability
Measures of performance, by a learner, by a teacher, by a team or by a school were all perceived by groups within schools as potential reasons to avoid change and innovation even when those changes were rooted in the desire to raise standards for all. Internal systems in school to manage performance needed to be adapted to keep them in step with the curriculum that they monitor.

Commitment
Commitment to learners and their learning, and to seeing through change was seen as central in two ways:

• If the needs of the learner are central to the curriculum design, then exploring them, and stating them clearly in the form of a commitment or promise is helpful. Everyone then knows what the learner can expect from his or her school
• The certainty that a planned redesign is genuine and will be carried through, albeit with modifications and refinements along the way, heavily influences how those changes are perceived and responded to. Clear long term commitment and buy-in from the school’s leadership team and governing body were common to the examples we discussed.

Engagement
All of the schools recognised that from the earliest stages, and all through the whole process of curriculum redesign, engagement with all stakeholders was an area that required continuous effort. Handled badly, it became a major brake on progress. Handled well, it provided ideas, energy, momentum and importantly validation. The aspects included in discussion were:

• Getting a student perspective, and where student leadership in school is developing or a strength, building on that fully. Learners have a tremendously important role to play as the drivers for change
• In an environment where schools and other bodies increasingly depend on each other to deliver a full curriculum, early and active engagement with the other parties that will be affected directly or indirectly
• Recognising those strategic local partners needed to deliver the redesigned curriculum and fully involving them in the process of design
• A programme to actively engage with and respond to the community, being clear about the reasons for change, the process, timescales and opportunities for involvement
• In the final analysis, having the bravery to change even against resistance – accepting perceptions and degrees of confidence and responding to them while retaining the commitment to meet the needs of learners first and foremost.

At Varndean School a futures vision group was vital to prepare the ground for change and generate ideas from within the staff rather than just from the leadership team. Continuous discussion with staff ensured that new ideas became familiar and less threatening. Involving students provided a powerful motivator for change. Together these actions reduced resistance. A major shift to 100-minute lessons was piloted in a single year group and evaluated by staff and students, with the lessons learned built into the next stages. These evaluations also informed the use of professional development time made available before the plans were implemented across the school. Professional development time has also been ongoing, with a research group keeping staff focused on best practice and department meetings having a developmental focus. Longer lessons are still under evaluation through an open dialogue with staff and students. Curriculum leaders have agreed minimum standards for lesson delivery and these are the basis for ongoing monitoring of standards.
Management
Structures in school are often closely linked to the curriculum they support. As part of the process of changing the curriculum the schools consulted had changed systems and organisational structures to match, indeed sometimes setting up those structures not around the current or the next curriculum design but around the one aimed for in the longer term to deliberately creating a tension that will lead to change.

Values incorporated in the new curriculum design and the skills needed to support it informed not just staff development but recruitment too. The importance of this being more than a token effort and being consistently applied in all new appointments was emphasised. In some cases staffing structures and needs had to be planned several years ahead as existing resources would not fully match the changes desired and interim stages had to be put in place.

Pace and risk
There was considerable variation in the pace of change between the schools consulted. We recognised:

- The timing needs to be matched to what is sustainable. It is equally valid to look for a relatively long and staged process, as it is to identify the need for urgent action
- In either case the time needed for planning and development was a significant cost and had to be built in
- Like all major innovation, there will always be some staff members who are ready to champion a project and take the lead. Identifying and nurturing champions for curriculum change was common to all the schools
- It is vital to create the confidence in staff to take risks and make decisions, and that this was as much about ‘do what I do’ as ‘do what I say’. Delegates shared examples where their response to a situation was such that it would both support a member of staff and send a message to the school as a whole
- If curriculum design is about changing defaults and not simply an exercise of re-labelling a few slots in the timetable then necessarily schools will be taking staff and learners outside their comfort zones.Acknowledging this, arguing the case and being supportive as people make the necessary steps is a theme that came up again and again.

A significant number of the Futures Vision schools discussed the tension between need to deliver increases in contextual value added and the need to be bold and get the curriculum right. Several had a strategy to ‘protect’ the core during the transition period, where assessment and accountability are felt most keenly and to develop different patterns on special days or in other parts of the curriculum. This isn’t them giving up, rather it is recognising that until accountability changes to match the stated aims of the curriculum, they can only move so far.

Professional development
Major changes in the default settings for how learning is organised and managed in a school will always bring with them a demand for professional development (PD). Practice discussed by the Futures Vision schools included:

- Ensuring that training and development reached beyond any ‘special teams’ who were deeply involved in the new curriculum and reached the wider staff. The creation of new silos was perceived as a real risk and professional development having a role in preventing that was recognised
- Sustaining the skills needed for innovation. It may well be that a small number of staff have the skills and knowledge that has allowed innovation to begin, but there is a key leadership role in recognising those with the potential to develop and broaden the base within school to make change less dependent on a few people longer term
- Having a sustained programme of workforce development around different ways of working, linked to the objectives of the new curriculum, recognising and valuing the role of more experienced staff and what they can offer, and constantly sharing the focus of learning in the new curriculum design and what the defaults should be to achieve it
- Looking to broaden the range of strategies for professional development in school.

One aspect of professional development that a number of schools commented on relates
to the way staff are engaged in discussion about the curriculum and learning has a huge impact on the way they respond to change. A worry often expressed by colleagues wanting to open a wide discussion on curriculum design is that teams will respond by only looking at their own area and how it will affect them, and yet a common defensive strategy is to over-focus by reducing the presentation of change to exactly that narrow argument and create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Some of the Futures Vision schools make the sharing and discussion of wider thinking on learning and school organisation a natural part of their general PD programme for all staff, finding that by engaging their teams at that level consistently and in a sustained way they can then reframe potentially difficult debates away from partisan interest.

St Peter’s Collegiate C of E School’s aim is to make subject knowledge more relevant in the curriculum by teaching it through competences. This should achieve a balanced, relevant and coherent approach between subjects, personal development and skills. To underpin this, the school have a five-year staff Inset plan involving development leading to internal accreditation in the key competences they have identified. These include use of the interactive whiteboard, podcasting, using the virtual learning environment and flash animation, leading to internal accreditation. They believe avoiding the tension between developing subjects and PLTS is not to have a quick fix solution, but to institute step by step changes year on year, involving all stakeholders in the co-construction of the new curriculum.

To support innovation in curriculum design Heartlands High School have been careful to make the best possible use of the time available to them. They have replaced two of their training days with ten one–hour twilight sessions over the year to create time and space for stakeholders to plan and discuss changes and work together. Timetabled lessons finish earlier each Friday for all students to follow an enrichment programme led by volunteers (coordinated by an administrator) creating quality time for staff CPD and planning. The enrichment programme offers 75 activities for learners.

**Progression**

Although the designs themselves within the schools at the Think Tank varied, what was common was the desire to craft an experience for learners that ensured the best possible progression all the way through their educational career including:

- Engaging with and drawing on the expertise of primary schools, and ensuring that they are involved in a process to adapt to the changing expectations at the school they feed into

- Thinking across the whole of the secondary curriculum from the outset and not considering one phase in isolation. Changes at key stage 3 now have major implications for key stage 4, very quickly that might affect school organisation (staffing, rooms etc) as well as the attitudes and expectations of learners.

**Vision**

Whilst aspects of curriculum design are often included within the vision and objectives of schools there remains the danger of it being seen as one problem amongst many rather than a central issue for the whole organisation. The Futures Vision schools had recognised that curriculum change is so central to the medium to long-term strategic direction of the school that it was included at the heart of all planning. Within the national programme of support for the new secondary curriculum, a recurring theme in discussion with schools has been the need for a single conversation in which subject responses and whole-school responses are not considered as separate issues any more than 11–14 curriculum design is seen apart from 14–19 work.

This single conversation also included ensuring that other opportunities and challenges as they arose were seen in the context of the development of the school curriculum at subject and whole-school level. Examples included:

- the development of school buildings
- pastoral and student support services
- new technologies planning.
Thomas Deacon Academy recently undertook a review of their curriculum that was driven very much by setting out a clear vision of what they wanted their learners to achieve, and how that would need them to consider change. Their first principle in designing their original curriculum was to maximise choice at key stage 4. In this review they focused on six key questions:

- What are our learners like now?
- What do we want our learners to be like?
- What are the strengths of our current curriculum?
- What features do we need to have in our new curriculum?
- How do we evaluate the impact of our new curriculum?
- What do we need to do to bring about the change to our curriculum?

This process clearly identified a need to address literacy deficiencies to give pupils greater access to their curriculum. The outcomes were:

- An extra English lesson in key stage 4
- Removal of discrete ICT lessons from the key stage 4 timetable, with students able to choose to take additional ICT as one of their option subjects if guided to do so
- Three pathways: GCSE, a hybrid of GCSE and applied courses and predominantly applied courses with the core subjects
- Compulsory RE GCSE – covering 85% of PHSE/citizenship etc
- Specialism giving more option choices, such as electronics and astronomy

The senior leadership team at De Ferrers Specialist Technology College recognised that their vision for development for the years ahead needed them to quite radically reorganise their leadership structure. They have moved to a leadership structure that mirrors the four Deeps of personalising learning (deep learning, deep experience, deep support and deep leadership). This reconfiguration will support a culture of innovation, more distributed leadership, more creative use of time and space, and a restructuring of the PD programme. The college’s focus on personalising learning has informed curriculum design. This includes three innovations in key stage 3: the use of primary approaches, a condensed key stage for some students and a learning to learn programme. A whole college data system supports personalisation and, with increasing awareness of CVA as a measure of success, the importance of matching courses to student needs.

Several schools cited examples where a major change in the school that wasn’t directly curriculum related became the principal lever to make significant curriculum redesign possible. Others related how an initial change in the curriculum had led to a series of other major shifts.

Priory Sports and Technology College found that what they did ‘below the surface’ in structures, processes and systems enabled the curriculum to be developed. Curriculum redesign for them involved major change for mentoring, pastoral systems, professional development and ICT infrastructure. This required a willingness to try and run the risk of failing. They adopted the philosophy, “make new failures, don’t repeat old ones.” They recognised that change is not instantaneous and that they must recognise the timelines required for those key aspects that will embed curriculum innovation and development in their school.

Some of the schools at the think tank have been involved in the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, which has been a big influence both on their thinking about the curriculum and the process of developing a new curriculum design.
The buildings at High Storrs School are being refurbished through a £27 million BSF investment. This will allow bespoke facilities for all areas of the curriculum, excellent student and staff learning facilities, high quality student and staff social areas and a technology rich design to fit curriculum and pastoral structures. A delay of two years in the BSF project for High Storrs was a disaster on one level but a golden opportunity to get values, principles and ideas together on the other. The newly developed school will be organised into faculties with collaborative curriculum delivery that moves beyond a subject based approach to treating the curriculum as a whole. Students will experience consistent practice across the school through curricular links between the development of learning skills and problem solving, as well as subject content. The six TLR 2 posts are to fit this plan; heads of faculty will not be heads of subjects. Recognising that building a shared vision takes time, the delay in BSF is making it possible to lay the groundwork for deeper change. This includes the development of a Masters course on site with 26 teachers now enrolled, and the use of materials from McBer for performance management competences, supporting self evaluation and new thinking.

Another school that has rethought plans for curriculum design is Estover Community College where it had a dramatic effect on scheduling. The school decided to halt planning on an RSA Opening Minds based curriculum model at key stage 3 when they found they had become a BSF Pathfinder school. The resulting change in physical space and wider school organisation represented an opportunity to make deeper changes. The senior leadership team have used the process of redesigning their school physically as a lever to rethink organisation and curriculum design.

They introduced change through putting highly innovative people in place and letting them get on with the job, but working closely with experienced senior leaders who provide both support and challenge. Estover has a very distributed ‘influence & innovation’ team, which emphasises low key but sharp control and direction mechanisms.

Other schools, planning within their existing accommodation, have also thought long and hard about how they harness the ideas and creativity of their middle leaders in curriculum design. In particular many recognise that there is room within a broad common framework for smaller teams to innovate in different ways.

Hornsea School and Language College introduced major changes in curriculum, including moving from individual to integrated subjects in the humanities and expressive arts. They also introduced a two-year key stage 3 in languages and early entry GCSEs in mathematics, English, modern foreign languages, RE and ICT. To achieve this they have consistently encouraged middle leaders to take risks, and created capacity by being prepared to abandon practice that wasn’t related to teaching and learning, such as a number of regular meetings. They heavily involve students and encourage networking to find and validate ideas. As a languages college, Hornsea have developed modern foreign language immersion groups in years 7 and 8; ICT and PSHE are taught in the target language. Evidence shows students’ learning has benefited.

This move towards bilingual learning echoes work over several years at Hockerill Anglo European College. Following the introduction of the IB Diploma in 1998, this language college established bilingual sections (German/English in 2000 and French/English in 2003) and the IB Middle Years Programme in 2005. In describing how they have made such deep changes Hockerill refer to the need for:

- Vision and a long term plan
- Reducing staff’s aversion risk by developing teams’ autonomy – they found greater innovation where teams had ownership
- Synergy between staff recruitment/retention/development and curriculum design – with personnel planning not being for the curriculum today, but for the vision for tomorrow
- Convergence of educational and business development.
Key issues

Curriculum redesign does not happen in isolation. There will be a number of other systems and structures in school that will need to be adapted such as performance management.

The sense that a planned redesign is genuine, based on shared values and will be carried through (albeit with modifications and refinements along the way) heavily influences how those changes are perceived and responded to by the wider school community.

The way staff are engaged in discussion about the curriculum and learning has a huge impact on the way they respond to change – putting the discussion about curriculum change in the right context can be a very powerful lever.
Evaluating impact

Curriculum design is inextricably linked to many systems and processes across school. A school might have to wait a number of years before learners complete their curriculum programme and get externally validated measures of progress. These mean that making judgements about the impact of changes in a curriculum design early enough for them to be useful can be difficult. All of the Futures Vision schools had in one form or other monitored progress of their changes and used that information to support further improvement.

Whilst overall examination and test performance could sometimes arrive too late after curriculum redesign has begun, schools had data from their normal internal progress tracking arrangements and were able to measure a number of factors that they believed had a major impact on the quality of learning or were signals of change. Measures included:

- Attendance and punctuality data
- Behaviour incidents and reports
- Survey responses
- Interviews
- Information collected through lesson observation
- Options choices and take up
- Use of optional tests.

An area that many wished they had devoted more time to early in the development of their new curriculum models was gathering data to compare against later. This process of building a baseline to work from is useful both for the purpose of measuring impact for change, and as a tool in the discussion of why and how the curriculum should change in school. As well as providing a useful tool for evaluating curriculum change, a strong sense of where the school is starting from will inform the discussions that shape change.

Self evaluation

Another key area of evaluation is in reviewing each school’s own progress in the design of the curriculum itself. In preparing resources to support this area SSAT have been reluctant to produce anything that might indicate a ‘right answer’ in terms of curriculum design, but we do plan to produce support materials in terms of the processes involved based on the experience of a number of schools in managing such significant changes.

A self evaluation model is being developed for schools to enable them to assess progress against their curriculum aims. It will also identify schools with similar aims at varying stages along the journey so that support networks can be developed and experiences shared. The model will be in use at events in 2009.

These self evaluation materials will be published at www.ssatrust.org.uk/curriculumdesign and will form a feature of events in 2009.
Introduction

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the 2006 publication The QCA looks forward identified that educationalists think the curriculum could be made better by:

- Improving links between subjects and making connections to expertise outside the school through visits and events
- Valuing and developing skills, personal attributes and knowledge that fall outside traditional subject boundaries
- Attaching value to all learning by broadening the range and styles of assessment
- Developing the curriculum to include a more global dimension.

They also found that employers have identified the qualities they value in young people leaving school as:

- Flexibility, self motivation, independence and the ability to learn
- Interpersonal and communication skills
- The ability to work in teams, to listen and to take responsibility
- Using language, mathematics and ICT skills to solve problems and communicate.

The Futures Vision schools all endorsed these views in their own contributions, but found a wide range of different approaches in the way they responded to them, something very much in line with the spirit of the new secondary curriculum programme.

While their solutions might have varied, they all recognise that to go beyond a token bolt-on approach to developing PLTS in the curriculum has an impact on the nature and organisation of subjects, the best structures for organising the curriculum itself and the process of assessment and reporting.
The learning leadership challenge

Schools were asked: is a root problem in designing the curriculum the tension between, on the one hand, subject knowledge leading later to credible accreditation; and on the other, equipping learners to develop the competences needed to join the 21st century workforce?

David Carter, Executive Principal at the John Cabot Academy, Bristol, shared these ideas, based on the experience of offering a curriculum that builds in the development of personal learning and thinking skills right at its heart, and his school’s thoughts on where that may take them next:

How does the learning of today create the learning workforce of tomorrow? Indeed, what does the current white-collar workforce say it needs today?

• People able to deal with new technologies
• People able to deal with the information overload, knowing where to look and how to evaluate it
• People able to work on their own initiative
• People able to solve problems
• People who can work in teams and communicate beyond them in a global community
• People who understand how society works and can appreciate the values that underpin it.

The competence model in year 7 at John Cabot was introduced in 2004, and has since been carried through into the Academy. The outcome of a clear focus on PLTS has been learners moving into year 8 who can:

• Work better in groups as leaders and team members
• Organise their work and that of others
• Manage their time
• Research, present and evaluate
• Adapt their learning style to the task in hand
• Work independently.

The challenge of course is in the design of the best curriculum beyond year 7 for our learners. After all what is the point of the redesigned year 7 if it does not have a lasting impact throughout the learner’s career?

Discussion at John Cabot has centred on these three hypotheses:

• The shape and structure of the school day needs to be based around learning
• Longer learning sessions shift the role of teacher to facilitator and enable the competence model to be applied
• The curriculum structure has to become an 11–19 model to ensure continuity and swiftness of response.

In order to ensure that the school day is designed primarily around learning rather than teaching we plan to move to blocks of quadruple (140min) and double lesson (70min) time in order to facilitate much more project based learning and cross curricular activity as defaults. Alongside this, students in key stage 3 will be blocked into ‘schools’, and there will be scope for additional core skills time for students who need it.
Heads of school and heads of faculty and subject will decide how time is used within given parameters. An extended day will run on two days per week and become integral with the curriculum.

**The 140-minute lesson will work to shift the default role of the teacher to facilitator. We envisage six ways that teachers will make use of the longer sessions:**

- A themed approach in which the activity needs to change much as it would in a 60 minute, three part lesson. The 140 minutes do not have to be with the same teacher or spent in the same ‘subject’
- Enquiry based learning using the already established Cabot competency curriculum skills, and taking advantage of the longer session to enable a wider research focus, leading to a more detailed presentation
- Extension projects that make greater reference to the extension assignments for ‘homework’ completion
- More time for core subject teaching with students needing additional support. Core subjects must contribute to the whole and monitor how literacy, numeracy and ICT are developed
- A balance between core modules and optional ones for students to select (80% core modules, 20% student selection within their ‘school’)
- Using learning spaces for research, ICT and design and make – with students staying in their learning area and teachers coming to them.

**Curriculum Model for 13–19 Learning**

For school leaders, this type of approach requires three vital strands of activity:

- Mapping the learning. Not the content
- Using the increased capacity for mentoring within subjects
- Knowing the performance profile of every student better than ever before.
Issues and examples

Competences and subjects

There are a range of different strategies for building personal learning and thinking skills into the curriculum each with its own advantages and limitations. These include:

- The expectation that PLTS will be covered within subjects as a matter of course, supported by training and monitoring systems
- The use of sessions such as tutor time to cover PLTS, learning to learn alongside other whole school matters
- Competences as a separate subject, treated like any other
- Extended periods of time, usually a day, where the subject based curriculum stops and a skill based approach is used
- Combinations of the above.

Redbridge Community School are now into their fifth year of running a transition curriculum based on the RSA Opening Minds model for all year 7 students. Almost a third of each learner’s week is devoted to a thematic approach to learning aimed at developing skills and competences (tools for learning).

At St John’s School and Community College students still have what are recognisably specialist teachers and rooms. However all work is organised around common themes, with an overriding focus on developing key skills and learning competences to form a cohesive learning experience. Their year 7 curriculum is theme based, each encompassing all the subjects of the national curriculum and some others. In year 8 there is still a theme based approach as students develop more advanced subject knowledge and skills. Every lesson is expected to highlight skill development, giving it a ‘recognised personal value’. The curriculum content is delivered through the development of the skills. Years 9 to 13 continue this emphasis with subjects delivering skills but looking more like many other curriculum models. A number of pathways enable students to take early entry when appropriate. A focus on mentoring supports the high level of challenge and the personalised aspect of students’ learning. The school have introduced the International Baccalaureate Diploma, as this matches the needs of their learners’ and their curriculum more closely than AS and A2 courses. The value they place upon the development and nurturing of individual competence now underpins the whole curriculum.

Key issues

Ownership and status in a school’s management structure; without which PLTS may tend to become the province of the enthusiast, with patchy coverage across the whole school.

Transfer of PLTS into different contexts in school, and the development of common vocabulary to describe learning in order to support that transfer.

The effective observation, recording and reporting of PLTS.
Assessment and PLTS
The Futures Vision schools recognise that while good subject teachers are skilled at assessing their own areas with rigour and know well what good progress in their subject looks like, they may not have the same level of confidence and shared understanding of how ‘good problem solving’ might appear. A desire to value progress in PLTS and at the same time to ensure consistency and rigour in their assessment was a consistent theme, as was the need for credible assessment frameworks for competences, against which learners can provide evidence of progression in learning skills.

The schools used ideas from a variety of sources, including RSA Opening Minds, Creative Partnerships, ELLI, Essential Learning, New Basics and of course the materials from QCA. A few schools were also exploring and drawing ideas from the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. Some based their work largely on a single source, others drew inspiration from a number, feeling that by creating their own they had far greater levels of staff ownership and understanding. In the final analysis it is more a question of which approach is most fit for purpose for any particular school and will allow it to meet the requirement to review progress for the whole learner in a way that supports development of an engaging curriculum. Some schools sought to link the development of PLTS to things like confidence, self esteem, life skills and citizenship.

Birches Head High School decided to develop their own PLTS-based curriculum in Y7 based on developing learners in the areas of principles of thinking, language and communication and emotional and social learning. The investment in time and energy by staff needed in developing the model and then planning in detail was balanced by a great sense of ownership by all in the school and the end-result being practical and user-friendly. The school ask specialist teachers to use the uniqueness of their subject to put a context around the development of skills.

Kingstone School also developed their own model, called cultural studies, which stands as a subject. They have incorporated a range of assessment systems into their planning that are supportive of and aligned with the kinds of learning they seek to promote, with an emphasis on learners talking through their work with each other, with staff and with small interview panels and the collection of evidence through the use of new technologies such as photographs and audio recordings.

Recognising that assessment methods should be fit for purpose and support changes in teaching and learning, the schools sought a wider range of assessment including:

- Peer assessment
- Self assessment
- Use of interviews and vivas (for example a panel of parents, staff, students and local employers)
- Preparing papers
- Giving presentations
- Use of an eportfolio to record evidence and related information
- Use of new handheld technologies to allow the capture of evidence as learning happens, not consecutively.

Schools warned against getting fixated on trying to accredit absolutely everything, recognising that there are some things we can value in other ways and the process of accreditation will change both delivery and the climate in which learning takes place.
Tudor Grange School already offer a learning to learn programme delivered by tutors in a vertical tutor group system, much of which is delivered by projects supported by online materials. Further, their year 7 curriculum is driven by online projects based on the DiDA (Diploma in Digital Applications) model. In the future they want their curriculum to be much better supported by out of the classroom learning experiences. They are exploring the idea of a service award their students can achieve, inspired by the CAS (creativity, action, service) programme at the centre of the IB Diploma Programme.

Accrington Moorhead Sports College focused on ensuring pedagogy and curriculum design are joined and thought of in the context of ‘what will our students need to look like at the end of all this?’ Their curriculum sees a thematic and skills based approach in year 7 called, ‘Exciting Minds through S.P.O.R.T’ (see diagram). All subjects contribute to the delivery of each of six modules through either discrete or cross curricular schemes of work. Each module has a whole school skill focus and ends with a whole year event/project. In addition to this a ‘Learn to Learn’ course runs as a discrete subject throughout key stage 3. The course aims to specifically develop individual, team and thinking skill attributes while students and a number of early entry qualifications run in year 9.

Key issues
Developing alternative ways to assess the development of skills to support learning.
Professional development.
Consistency and quality management.
Managing duplication and workload.
Ensuring parity of esteem.
Effective practice in relating subjects to PLTS

Schools identified a number of issues and successful strategies they had used when introducing PLTS as an important part of their curriculum that previously had been organised almost exclusively into subjects. The list below is drawn from a number of different examples and so some approaches are mutually exclusive.

- Retaining a subject based organisation but then asking cross-subject teams to work together to deliver a particular block of time jointly
- Continuing to ensure that the value of specialist staff skill is recognised and worthwhile and that new models don’t deskilf teachers
- Weaving competences into subject based structures, so the learner sees subjects, but PLTS are incorporated consistently across all
- Weaving subjects into competence based structures so the learner sees a series of themes or projects within which subject knowledge is mapped, delivered and assessed
- Starting with obvious cross curricular themed skills or events to develop expertise and make quick low risk gains. Common examples were specialist colleges building on their specialism (eg business and enterprise projects) across the whole school
- Over time, training parents and teachers to value what they gain from developing PLTS rather than thinking about the time lost from subjects, and so reframe the whole ‘subject vs skills’ debate
- Positively promoting applied learning courses and fighting any negative associations for courses that emphasise skills development as such ideas and attitudes pervade all parts of the curriculum not just the optional aspects
- Looking for examples of good practice in school that blend development of skills and subject knowledge well and promote them
- Making the links between the development of Diplomas and work based learning and the need for rigorously planning and delivering PLTS in other aspects of the curriculum
- Making the best possible use of peripatetic teachers and higher level teaching assistants, who may not always be tied into subject based structures
- Looking for simple changes in the physical spaces available like knocking together rooms and changing the default room furniture layouts
- Giving enrichment and quality of learning at key stage 3 as much support and encouragement as pushing for early entry
- Looking for opportunities to make lessons involve real life learning in which learners are thinking about audience, developing skills and attitudes, and developing themselves as people, because in that kind of climate the development of PLTS will be natural.

At Norham Community Technology College key stage 3 students study the national curriculum subjects and are grouped according to ability. There is a transition group that supports a small number of students through the change from primary school to secondary that works intensively to remove barriers and help vulnerable learners to exhibit self-confidence and positive attitudes to college as well as improvements in attendance. It has been useful and natural to focus on certain key PLTS and literacy skills with these learners to support that transition. Twelve focus days, six curriculum and six pastoral, allow the college to suspend the timetable and look at all aspects of learning in a more creative and appropriate way.
At West Exe Technology College after much discussion about the potential for perceived conflict between developing subject knowledge and securing progress in PLTS, they have safeguarded the core subjects of English, maths & science and technology. Lesson time for these subjects remains the same with an expectation that cross curricular dimensions, PLTS etc will be made explicit to students where these occur and that students will be able to choose to be assessed in these areas during those lessons. All other subjects have given up curriculum time to contribute to a skills/competencies-based cross-curricular package called i-Learn lasting one day a week in each of years 7, 8 and 9. This takes place on a rolling basis to ensure students experience each subject discretely at some point during KS3, as it was felt that a complete loss of subject identify might have a detrimental effect on option numbers at key stage 4.

The cross curricular themes, PLTS etc included in all subjects are mapped centrally so that i-Learn teachers are aware of the departments where students will receive reinforcement of their coverage.

The West Exe i-Learn team comprises subject specialists from the foundation subject areas donating time to i-Learn in a particular year group. This is led by humanities subjects in year 7 with support from MFL, ICT, Technology & PE, expressive arts subjects in year 8 and a range of non-core subjects to allow learners to focus on applied learning areas not traditionally experienced by their students at key stage 3 in year 9 (reflecting applied learning second specialism).

The Parkside Federation organises teachers into faculties where a common learning language is developed across different subject specialisms and where teachers work in rotation to highlight the synergy between different areas of content and the importance of learning skills. Time is used flexibly with regular opportunities to learn in interdisciplinary groups on project briefs, which require students and staff to work in a context beyond the comfort zone of subjects. Working with students from other age groups and schools, often through exercising choice, makes further demands of young people's competencies: organisational, emotional and practical.

Media technologies are used across the curriculum as a means of promoting creative learning and outcomes. In particular, students combine the exploration of a topic with the challenge of working in diverse spaces and in diverse groups, demanding that students develop leadership skills and negotiation skills and also consideration for the learners working around them. Students do not need continuous supervision and the approach encourages excellent behaviour and attitudes. Excellent outcomes result from a curriculum that builds in a high level of trust between staff and students.

Tonbridge Grammar School considered a competence based course for the whole of year 7 but decided not to proceed after consultation. The school community felt it to be too risky, accepting that it probably would produce better learners, but concerned about its subsequent impact on exam performance can be taken as read. They did however decide to use Guy Claxton's work on deep learning as the basis for the four skills they wanted all students and staff to be aware of. These have been shared with staff, and incorporated into schemes of work. Students have also been given the four categories and in years 7 and 12 the ASDAN Portfolio gathers evidence of progress in each. They also decided to go for a pilot of Enquiry Based Learning (EBL) weeks in year 7, which they plan to expand to year 8. Longer term they will create a "skills based year 9" sandwiched between a two-year key stage 3 and key stage 4 that will allow subject leaders to plan for a year prior to students starting their options and follow the IB Middle Years Programme to create a holistic model for delivery.
Key issues
This is an area in which the local context for each school will have a tremendous impact on the approach chosen – tempting as it would be to choose an approach based on the school's strengths, the principal factor ought to be the values that arise from the needs of its learners.

Subject structures in the curriculum are as much about management as they are about content and knowledge – and changes in management structures will need to reflect curriculum change.

Structural changes that support PLTS
The next section focuses in some depth at the way that structures can shift in school in order to alter the default settings for learning, however there are some very specific changes to enhance the delivery of PLTS that can be treated separately. Similarly, schools that have emphasised PLTS in their curriculum design find that structures that served them well in the past are no longer as well aligned with the running of the school.

Examples include:

- Flexible structures for using time, whether it be longer lessons, or half or full days linked to work that lends itself to PLTS development
- Shorter and wider KS4 courses lasting a year that naturally lead to longer sessions and greater opportunities for learners to demonstrate PLTS successfully
- The use of early entry (perhaps in November) to create space in the key stage 4 timetable for study support time or project work
- Reviews of homework: how it is structured, planned, set and assessed
- Developing blocks of time that concentrate on a particular set of skills, either in a whole week for a period, or for set times of each week for a whole year.

For example two years ago Bowring Community Sports College reorganised year 7's 21-lesson week into lessons where English, maths and science are delivered discretely and extended blocks of learning where the focus is on students developing PLTS rather than acquiring subject content. These blocks are:

- Challenge Time, where students are set a ‘challenge’ which they work in teams to solve
- Tutor Time, which starts the week with ‘big picture’ and ends with a celebration assembly
- Talk Time based in modern foreign languages with an emphasis on language learning skills to boost students’ literacy
- Team Time in PE and adapted from Step Into Sport allowing students to take responsibility for their own learning and that of their peers
- Express Time where students are based in expressive arts with emphasis on project based work, which combines different art forms.

At Caroline Chisholm School there is a personal development programme for all key stage 4 students that includes PSHE/citizenship, work related learning, ECDL, minimum RE requirement, plus a range of options for individual choice. Several choices are off-site, including local sports clubs and gymasia. A number of choices such as self-defence or first aid are offered on-site by other organisations.
The Hyde Technology School attained second applied learning specialism in 2006, which charged them to re-examine the diet they provided for their learners. As their learners are predominately kinaesthetic and visual they have found that applied learning courses have been adopted to meet their needs. They have not provided pathways such as an academic or applied route but have allowed all learners to choose from a full range. Each type of course is seen to hold the same status and as a consequence applied courses are not seen as the ‘poor relation’. Mixing and matching courses has been a driver in raising standards and achievement.

During year 7 at City Academy Bristol the curriculum focuses largely on developing young people’s habits as more effective learners. For one day a week (two 180 minute sessions) students experience project based learning approaches through ‘project 7’. This experience aims to develop their ability to think for themselves, question critically and have confidence in their own views, as well as ensuring that all students are more willing to take risks and adapt their thinking and learning to different situations. The programme aims to develop students’ cooperative skills, where they are able to develop the habits of working effectively with others, sharing ideas, listening, considering alternative viewpoints and building on their own and others ideas. The aim is to develop a curriculum that ensures that students become partners in learning, where they are consulted regularly and encouraged to think about how they learn best. For the rest of the learning week students learn through other curriculum areas with a dual focus on developing learning habits, as well as the key concepts and processes for each subject. This dual focus continues throughout years 8 and 9.

Heartlands High School introduced a year 7 induction project with a themed approach involving all departments and pupils, which followed a year 6 transition project. The school are seeking to develop independent learners, but recognise that for some teachers the default is to sit them at a desk with a worksheet. The emphasis in the school has moved to presenting problems and ideas to the children, rather than solutions and answers, and building experiences that challenge the pupils to think. This has led to Heartlands emphasising a focus on the skills they wish the learner to acquire as opposed to the content of the lesson together with interactive lessons that use different learning styles, develop their pupils’ skills as a learner and reinforce expectations.

Heartlands is now planning to block curriculum areas and groups of students in key stage 3 to support greater flexibility, collaboration and cohesion. By blocking subjects together and students together in half-year groups, they allow some departments to move away from one-hour lessons and work together on a theme, topic or set of skills. It also facilitates taking pupils out of the classroom to deliver the curriculum in a different way or in a different area.
The introduction of Diplomas offers an important opportunity to develop structures for the development of PLTS within the 14–19 age range.

The Cambridge Area Partnership will be launching the Creative & Media Diploma in September 2008, led by The Parkside Federation. At Level 2, a group of fifty 14 year olds from four schools will be taught together by six staff from different discipline areas across the week and a multi-skilled technician/tutor.

The course is designed to offer an introduction to the whole sector, yet builds in choice throughout, so that each student can tailor his or her curriculum through the proportion of time spent on particular skills: for example, in a media unit, one student most motivated by performing arts might flavour their experience towards music by focusing on soundtrack for film rather than focus on the filming itself. Jig-sawing such a soundtrack into the projects of other students will require high-end personal and interpersonal skills. The focus on skills throughout the qualification, where the competencies required for success in the sector are prioritised over a one-size fits all subject model, will prepare students to take on increasing levels of independence. For example, students will stage a citywide youth arts festival and will have real responsibility in dealing with employers. Authentic exposure to business contexts will give credence to PLTS as opposed to simulation, which can undermine the validity of the approach.

At post-16 Long Road Sixth Form College are investigating how to rework their use of spaces and staff to provide a studio approach to the Creative & Media Diploma, which, whilst more closely echoing the professional workplace also has parallels with the primary classroom. Students will be given complete responsibility for the space, will have roles within their workgroups and will exert increased control over the shape of the learning day. It is felt that such an approach will break the reliance on teachers often faced by sixth form colleges and will provide a context within which students recognise the importance of PLTS in higher education and professional situations.

Key issues

Classroom size and layout have a huge impact on the effectiveness of a skills based approach: a skills approach will not have the same needs as a subject based one.

Many of the systems changes discussed in the next section will be very highly complementary to a greater emphasis on PLTS in the curriculum; indeed many simply won’t make sense without it.

The selection of themes for interdisciplinary work needs to be handled with care. Not all themes lend themselves equally to the needs of all students as expressed through specific subjects. The subjects have a great deal to offer through the dimensions identified for the new secondary curriculum.
The argument for reconfiguration

Schools were asked:

Is the real answer to redesigning the curriculum the reconfiguration of the way we use people, time and locations? If so how are you doing that in your school?

Alternatively, how are you making traditional structures work?

Cheryl Heron, Principal of Bridgemary Community Sports College offered this challenge to working within traditional patterns.

How often do schools get requests for students to have time off for the harvest?

That’s how the present school year was developed. The system was invented 100 years ago for another time and another reason. It’s time to change. Recycling is an important part of everyone’s lives at the moment but we shouldn’t be recycling the same components when it’s about students’ futures. They should be central to all that happens.

There is nothing in regulations to stop us from moving away from these antiquated patterns in which we fit learners into tried and tested structures based on time, location and people. Such structures don’t bring the best out of our learners, nor prepare them to take on an active role in their community.

Legislation states a child has to have 380 sessions of learning a year. The pattern of the school year is historic and needs to be seen as something to flex. Why do we have an emotional attachment to a lesson of 45 to 60 minutes and then ask the learner to move to another area of the school to repeat it again and again, five or six times a day?

Why do we cram students into little boxes of time?

Time should be flexible, according to the learning need. What’s wrong with different lengths of time for different subjects?

Whole-days, half-days – what other patterns might be useful? Let’s move to flexible time schedules that are negotiated with the student, and use the school day, terms and years to meet their lifestyle needs.

Bridgemary have done this through their 24/7 pilot working to meet lifestyle needs, without having all students in at the same time. It has had a positive effect on use of facilities on behaviour and on many other aspects of school life. The pilot is extending to three year groups next year and the school is introducing a later session as well as the early and middle one.

Time should also offer flexible working opportunities for staff. Do they have to be present at school all the time? Is this linked to trust or 1265 hours? The effect of offering staff flexibility has been highly motivational.

In the old days students were managed as large groups, in rooms with four walls in a building with long corridors. We called this a school. But is a school a building? What is the definition of a school – is it about its location or what it does?
Learners need to experience a variety of conditions to meet their individual needs. They need to have access to facilities that are fit for purpose and allow them to experience different situations. Going to the local further education college as part of their key stage 4 curriculum has become the norm but it needs to expand and let the students see that learning can take place anywhere in the community. Is it health and safety that becomes the barrier to this? Is it too risky to try? New networks and partnerships are allowing us to share facilities and staff – are you a member of an EIP, federation etc. What role will you play in your 14–19 collaboration?

Designs of buildings need to encourage socialisation and not just a nomadic life of moving from classroom to classroom. We’re seeing a move towards schools within schools – how far can we go towards achieving this in old buildings?

Why the emotional attachment to a building anyway? Why is learning only assumed to only take place when students are physically present on school sites? Locations can be virtual. Virtual learning environments can play an important part in learning – but we need to look at what else technology can offer us. There are virtual new worlds out there – can these be used?

Building Schools for the Future is offering us a chance to create environments around learners’ needs but it isn’t just about buildings. Where there is an opportunity for a new build let’s put the emphasis on flexibility. Create a diversity of spaces for a diversity of learning.

Structures based on hierarchy, status, department or pastoral affiliations are inflexible, multilayered and not principally about meeting the needs of learners. They don’t allow us to see the child as a whole and discover their needs. Teachers with pastoral responsibilities often get the blame for failings of classroom teachers. Workforce reforms allowed us to be more creative and use the right kind of people for the right kind of jobs. We were told not to assimilate but a majority of schools did because they didn’t want to upset the teachers. What about the needs of the students? Remodelling empowers schools to tackle key issues in a way that reflects individual circumstances.

Workforce reforms, the Every Child Matters and the national agendas have allowed schools to use a lot of different people and agencies. We have a student support team. We have a police officer as a member of staff and are about to have a vicar to help with community as well as spiritual needs, We can move away from a one system fits all.

New roles are also emerging as we network and form partnerships to improve learning opportunities. Executive heads, ECM related roles, function directors, paid governors etc. Sharing human resources should become the norm and then there would be consistency in what all learners could receive. Networks constitute the infrastructure for innovation.

The learner as a partner is important to all schools now and student voice should be a central part of any school. Our student voice structure mirrors the staff. Let’s not forget students are very good at being honest!

Schools that are flexible with their use of time, people and locations recognise that students need freedom to learn. Freedom to learn means that they have the opportunity to explore, take risks and challenge their community. What can we do to ensure that all schools adopt this belief?

If everyone started planning with the question

“How will this meet the needs of…… “

Perhaps it will!
Reconfiguring yearly cycles and routines

Much curriculum design work takes place within a number of well established and well understood structures:

- The whole school, and indeed all schools in a local area, open and close on the same days and at the same times
- Over the course of their school career, learners have a common structure of years – typically a three year cycle at the start of secondary education, a two-year cycle with examinations and finally a third two year cycle for some learners that leads to further examinations
- Within any school, the way the day is structured is common to all learners

Many schools have challenged the above – sometimes for all their learners, or sometimes for distinct groups or on a case-by-case basis.

System Redesign 3: Curriculum Redesign a pamphlet published by the SSAT explores some examples of changes in these areas and their impact on other aspects of schooling. The section below describes some work in schools and the main issues that have arisen.

Key stages

For the vast majority of secondary schools in England the key stage boundaries remain set at the end of year 9 and year 11 for all learners (the 3+2+2 curriculum). A significant number of schools however have moved to other patterns in recent years, although still retaining the idea of a common pattern for all of their students. These include:

- Early entry for SATS and key stage 4 examinations (2+2+3)
- Early SATS and longer key stage 4 courses (2+3+2)
- Late start to key stage 3 (1+2+2+2) to provide a more solid base for the secondary curriculum, with the timing of end of key stage tests unaffected
- Bridging years between a shortened key stage 3 and later study (2+1+2+2) either with early entry for SATS or at the end of the bridging year in year 9.

The requirement to change key stages at certain times, and indeed for all learners in all subjects at the same time, does not arise from regulation; it comes from commonly understood practice and the need for reliable administration.

The flexibility does exist for each learner to complete key stage 3 and indeed key stage 4 in different subjects in different years according to what will offer them the best mixture of opportunity, challenge and support. As systems to administer schools have become far more powerful, so schools have begun to make use of these opportunities.

It is important however to emphasise that the purpose of this flexibility is to allow schools to flex and blur key stage boundaries for the benefit of each learner and this should be seen as working with the spirit of the new secondary curriculum. Most schools looking for flexibility in this area will have referred to the guidance published by the National Strategies in 2006 (see Further Support section for details) however they should be aware of the latest guidance from the DCSF which is that “Schools should not enter a pupil early for the key stage 3 test in a subject unless they expect them to achieve at least a Level 6 and have made 2 levels of progress during the key stage.”

The examples of practice in this publication that follow are of course based on the earlier guidance where the headteacher could enter a learner for end of key stage tests if they felt that they had completed the programmes of study for key stage 3 and were likely to attain a level 5 or 6.
Saffron Walden County High School introduced a two-year key stage 3 in September 2003 as part of the first cohort of the national pilot. This complemented existing developments in the school related to supporting personalisation issues around acceleration, such as able historians starting AS History rather than GCSE and able Art students taking AS in year 11 in place of GCSE. Following the initial experience of a shortened key stage 3, the decision was taken in spring 2004 that all students should start key stage 4 in year 9. The judgement was made that for their students it was entirely appropriate for them to go through an options process, so from September 2005 students began key stage 4 courses in year 9.

By the summer of 2007 approximately one third of the SWCHS cohort took at least two GCSEs in year 10, with 10% of the cohort taking four GCSEs. Results were comparable with comparable year 11 students taking the same examinations with a similar profile.

The students that took early GCSEs have a range of options including additional GCSEs, AS levels, bridging GCSE/advanced level courses and enrichment. Less able mathematics students continued to take their GCSE in summer 2007. The school have now begun to introduce Open University modules into year 13 for biology and history.

Waingels College have also restructured the way that the key stages are organised, alongside a move to vertical learning communities that replace horizontal year groups and the development and implementation of a personal development curriculum delivered by adult learning coaches and student mentors. Beginning with the introduction of a project and competence-based ‘foundation’ curriculum based on the RSA ‘Opening Minds’ framework (which began with a pilot of 30 very able students in order to demonstrate the impact of innovation to their parent-body, then to all year 7 and now into years 8 and 9), they have begun grouping students by stage not age to allow, especially for acceleration of the most able through the curriculum (key stage 3 SATs in year 8, GCSE in year 9 and year 10 to IB Diploma in year 11. This complements the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Diploma into key stage 5 and the IB Middle Years Programme into key stage 4.

Outwood Grange College are now moving into a new period of innovation in their curriculum design building on their move four years ago to a two year key stage 3 for all students. In this previous model, GCSE courses started in year 9 for all subjects but options didn’t start until year 10. During the school’s three year key stage 4 some students worked at Level 2 for all three years whilst just over a quarter started some Level 3 study in year 11. For some learners ‘option’ time was used to boost performance in English and mathematics. These changes supported the raising of student engagement and achievement over that period.

While the organisation of the curriculum at key stage 4 into pathways, into which students can either opt or be guided is quite common practice, it is seen much less often at key stage 3. Some of the Futures Vision schools including Accrington Moorhead Sports College, Loxford School of Science and Technology and Tonbridge Grammar School are all at the development stage in this area where they feel that it can offer benefits to specific groups of learners.

Key issues

Schools may adapt the way they organise the key stages for considerable benefit to the learners in their own context, but any pattern will have a downside for some groups of learners and some areas of the curriculum. Many early-adopters in this area are now seeking ways to make the pattern of the key stages flexible both by subject area and by learner.

The guidance from DCSF on a two-year key stage 3 is that “Schools should not enter a pupil early for the key stage 3 test [in a subject] unless they expect them to achieve at least a level 6 and have made 2 levels of progress during the key stage [in that subject]."
Course organisation
Historically much course organisation has been driven by the supply of staffing skills and room availability rather than being driven by the needs of learners. As a system we are likely to see significant changes in many patterns of organisation as schools begin to become more flexible to meet need. These changes may be acute where schools choose to run courses in shorter cycles (as described in the next section).

While it is common for schools to review their curriculum periodically, and in some cases to redesign quite extensively, it is unusual for a school to start planning afresh for each new year-group dependent on its needs and profile.

Gable Hall School does exactly that. Hence the key stage 3 curriculum each year reflects the needs of the incoming year 6 students, and the key stage 4 curriculum will in turn reflect the needs of those students.

The current year 7 curriculum accommodates three different cohorts of students, Routes A, B and C.

- Route A is followed by the top four sets and is covered in 51 hours per fortnight over two year period
- Route B is followed by the next four sets and these students cover the curriculum in 51 hours per fortnight over a 3-year period.
- Route C is followed by the final set and covers 50 hours per fortnight. These students cover most of KS3 in one year and move on to some KS4 courses for the following four years
- The provision for English, mathematics and other subjects varies according to route and according to individual sets within routes.

Away from the two year exam course
The default for most learners at key stage 4 is to begin a number of courses, some core, some optional in September of year 10 and to complete them at the end of year 11 with some variations such as early entry in one or two subjects.

Schools are considering moving away from this pattern for a variety of reasons, which vary a great deal from school to school. What is common is the use of single-year courses for some areas where a larger proportion of time is given over to a subject to allow it to be completed more quickly.

The reasons for change include:
- The desire to reduce the number of teachers working with a learner at any given time
- To reduce the distance between the learner and the end of the course – making objectives and the need for completion more urgent
- To give the student the chance to make changes in their options each year and not be locked into a two-year cycle
- To allow students to move onto higher level courses having completed existing ones
- To create longer blocks of time for a deeper approach to study through more practical and engaging work
- To reduce exam load on the learner at any given time
- To increase the ability of the school to be flexible in its option choices and reduce the number of uneconomic class sizes without narrowing curriculum choice
- To use the successful completion of courses as a motivating factor in further study.

At Longfield School in Darlington, students choose two option courses in each of year 10 and year 11, having four hours of concentrated study for each per week – leading to completion in a single year. One of the reasons for this approach was to create greater opportunities for deeper learning and enquiry within courses.
Outwood Grange College is moving to an arrangement where, as well as option courses being only one year long, students are potentially in mixed-age classes for these courses. As they operate a three-year key stage 4, students in years 9, 10 and 11 might be working alongside each other. Included in this curriculum model are a variety of enrichment options which are non-accredited skills based programmes, designed to:

- Boost performance before level 2 accredited courses
- Bridge gaps between level 2 and level 3 courses
- Reduce the exam/coursework burden on students at any moment in time
- Engage students without the pressures of accreditation.

As with their previous model, for some learners ‘option’ time is used to boost performance in English and Mathematics.

Key issues

In many subjects (and especially modern foreign languages) the move to single-year courses raises the issue of continuity. The argument is that in some subjects a ‘year off’ before entering key stage 5 will lead to lower attainment and reduced uptake. That said, there is no reason for a one size fits all solution and by pairing language options together, or with another subject, two-year options could easily be incorporated into a model where other subjects were completed in a single year.

Single year courses require learners to make choices before they necessarily have all the information about their progress, for example the learner choosing to go onto a higher level course while part way through the preceding one. There is an impact on internal assessment systems to ensure that learners are supported by the most accurate possible information. Where all the single-year courses are at the same level this is less of an issue.

Changing the school year

Much has been made in recent years of switching from the traditional three-term year in our schools to other patterns, with schools that have adopted four or five term patterns reporting positive results. At the same time the assumption is often made that the school year begins at the end of the summer break, and indeed most school timetables cover a 12-month period beginning in August or September. Some schools are moving away from this, either through shifting the start of the academic year to the completion of the June examinations, or moving to a timetable cycle of less than 12 months (ie, more than one timetable per year).

These changes seek to:

- Re-energise the final months of the traditional school year
- Reduce learning loss over extended holiday periods
- Make the most efficient use of school resources, particularly once some groups of learners are no longer in lessons as they have begun examinations or left school.

Ultimately the notion that all courses for all learners start and end on the same days and that cycles such as key stage length and examination courses are constant for all, stem from the need for good administration, and not effective learning, and as information systems allow greater flexibility, schools are using it.

Longfield School begin their new school year in June, with students effectively spending only two and a half terms in year 7 before moving up to year 8. This, coupled with one-year options courses at key stage 4, builds motivation for students, removes dead time and sets up bridging projects over the summer break.
Penryn College begin a period of intensive induction to key stage 4 for their students who have completed SATs in year 9 with a reorganised structure including project time, ICT days, intensive languages days and starting options courses early. Similarly Cathays Park School in Cardiff operate a completely different timetable for the whole school for the final seven weeks of the summer term with all staff, including those released by completing examination courses, engaged in an intensive enrichment and preparation programme as well as targeted professional development where it is most needed to deliver future programmes.

Key issues
Having a school year that is out of sync with other schools in the area will present problems for collaborative curriculum arrangements, but also with staff recruitment. Where a group of local schools can change together this problem of course is alleviated. Schools having their staffing/recruitment cycle slightly out of step with their curriculum cycle will inevitably find that they have to staff a few weeks of next year’s timetable with this year’s staff.

Reconfiguring the working day
Lesson length
Lessons are typically of a common length throughout the school day for all groups, although some subjects in some year groups will have double or triple sessions. For some reason the default in our secondary schools seems to be between 45 and 60 minutes. It is also very common for lessons to remain set at the same length for every day of the week, and every week of the year except on designated days where the timetable is ‘collapsed.’

Schools changing lesson length (almost always creating longer lessons, sometimes coupled with greater variation) do so in order to:

- Make some types of activity easier to achieve – a more project based approach for example naturally lends itself to longer lessons
- Make some types of lesson much more difficult – longer lessons make heavily teacher directed sessions difficult to sustain and manage
- Render some behaviours, such as asking classes to spend whole lessons completing a worksheet or simply ‘carrying on from the last lesson’ unsustainable
- Make approaches such as assessment for learning and the use of new technologies more effective.

Leasowes Community College have operated with three very different timetable structures for a number of years that include one-hour lessons, one-day lessons and longer sessions of up to a week. These sessions are mainly based in subject areas and teams of staff identify the areas of work that will best respond to a particular style or approach and plan accordingly.

Lawrence Sheriff School are looking at the introduction of ‘depth days’ where students will spend the whole day on one activity or project. They are by no means alone in this with a very high proportion of the Futures Vision schools either already operating, or planning to introduce very soon some form of model where learners spend whole days or longer involved in project based learning.

In parallel with this Lawrence Sheriff are looking at more flexible use of curriculum time designed to meet the specific needs of different departments, recognising that some prefer less frequent but longer blocks of time, whilst others such as modern foreign languages much prefer very regular but shorter blocks of time. Faced with a similar situation, Ninestiles School moved to 2.5 hour lessons across the board, but enabled pairs of subjects at key stage 3 to divide those sessions into 75-minute blocks, which are more suitable for learning in that area.
Corby Business Academy are taking this approach further still by scheduling a whole year group into a Faculty Area for a half day, and then allowing that team to sub-divide and manage that time as needed, and indeed vary it over the course of the year as necessary. By re-arranging the whole school into five faculties who are individually responsible for teaching each year group for two half-days each week, they have devolved the responsibility for organising the learning, grouping, timing and most radically the staffing to the Vice Principal responsible for each. This means that the timetable is not driven by availability of staff or central decisions about time allocated to individual subjects but rather that the half days pattern across the faculties is agreed and then staff within each area have to be fitted to that pattern. Each faculty has complete autonomy to decide how long their lessons will be and which subjects will be taught. This means that the curriculum is personalised to the needs of each year group and the subject leaders are directly leading the curriculum change by being supported to work in partnership, making all the key curriculum decisions within each faculty.

Following an audit of lost time due to lesson changeover at Newall Green High School, the school moved to double 50 minute slots called learning opportunities for all curriculum areas and have since been making minor changes during the following three years. The school calculates that we have created the equivalent of a full academic year over five years.

Varndean School introduced 100-minute lessons for every subject across the whole school in 2003. This means that every student now has a three period day in a two-week timetable. By changing lesson length they believe have altered the ‘default settings’ of the school, in relation to the quality of lesson planning, time for assessment for learning and student voice and the quality of relationships. Staff, students and Ofsted now describe interpersonal relations as the best feature of the school. Additionally they have worked with a division of curriculum time in which no subject gets more than 10%, which has increased the time for humanities and the arts in key stage 3. And they have guaranteed four free options for all students in key stage 4, as well as offering all a technology option.

Priory Sports and Technology College built one hour of mentoring per week for each member of staff to mentor three or four students from their group for 20 minutes each. This has been established as an entitlement for all and supported staff in developing a greater understanding of learners’ needs. Reliable and user-friendly ICT systems complemented this development.

Mentoring takes place within a vertical pastoral system so all staff have contact with all years in terms of dialogues, targets, understanding etc. Staff no longer concentrate on key stages as form tutors, therefore there is greater whole school understanding of issues like transition, year 8 performance dip, options, target setting, exams and coursework, etc. By expanding the knowledge base of staff (through regular structured dialogue with students), curriculum change and innovation is easier to introduce. Students provide the rationale through which change practice can be argued and rationalised. The staff listen to the problems with their colleagues and their subjects, and become more open to change.

Key issues

Longer sessions can produce a significant load in terms of planning and producing materials in the setting up stages, so the lead time and stages of implementation require care.

Where management structures support it, a high degree of control can be delegated to an area of school to create a more responsive and flexible use of time for the curriculum. This will affect other aspects, such as substitutions for absent staff and professional development.
Start and finish times

While the exact start and finish time varies from school to school, another default that is very widespread is the assumption that all learners will start and finish school at the same time. A further default is that enrichment activity takes place at the end of the normal working day when many learners will be leaving the site, or in the middle part of the day.

Schools moving to patterns where groups or individuals have different patterns, and indeed ones that may change over the course of the year, do so in order to:

• Allow the learner (and indeed staff) to match their work to their life
• Make better use of limited resources
• Change the environment for learning at certain times of day
• Create the flexibility in what is effectively a longer set of opening hours to include a greater variety of experiences in school without necessarily increasing costs to the same extent.

At Bridgemary Community Sports College the opportunity to have a pattern of either early or late starts was made available to new key stage 4 students. Sufficient numbers took up the offer of an early session that now several groups of students in the core subjects are able to begin school at 7.30am and on some days finish earlier. The demand for places is limited by the ability of the school to create viable sized sets at present, however it has proven popular with both staff and students and is being extended to later sessions and a wider group of learners.

Lawrence Sheriff School changed the school day to start immediately with lessons for all at 8:50 am, with assemblies at the end of the day and an enrichment slot in the middle of the morning during which mixed age groups take part in over 70 clubs run by both teaching and non teaching staff, sixth formers and members of the local community. Placing enrichment in a high value slot that ensures full participation from all students means that it can be fully incorporated into the ‘whole planned learning experience’ and not marginalised.

At Caroline Chisholm School, post 16 students register biometrically and go straight to lessons; then having half-hour sessions with their mentor every six weeks.

Key issues

Core subjects and those with strong demand for option places will be better placed to meet the needs of enough students to be viable than minority subjects in making the school day more flexible. Although this might seem counterintuitive, a low take-up subject can quite easily run as an addition to the school day when nothing else depends on it, but is difficult to fit as a combination within a smaller population of students. There is of course no reason why in addition to some form of shift system there cannot also be some courses simply added before or after normal hours, as happens in many schools already, especially if school will be open and in use at those times.
Break and recreational times
Alongside common start and finish times, the arrangement of recreational time for students often defaults to situations where the whole school is out of lessons at once.

Schools seeking to move away from this situation do so in order to:

- Make best possible use of specialist spaces in school
- Ease congestion in dining areas and toilets and improve the quality of recreation time for students and staff
- Better manage supervision of recreation times.

The Compton School have a system of staggered breaks and lunches where students go to break or lunch according to a timetable based on subjects being taught. At break or lunchtime about a third of students will be out at one time, while the other two thirds are still in lessons. This avoids having the whole school community on break or lunch at the same time, ensuring a calmer and more ordered atmosphere. The school day starts and finishes early, with the first break at 9.40am and the first lunch at 11.40am, so most of the learning is done in the early part of the day when most students are fresh. There are less incidents at lunchtime because the break is short, while students have time to eat and get some fresh air. Students feel safer and more secure. The day finishes early (2.50pm) allowing staff more quality time for planning.

Ninestiles School operate a system of rolling breakfast (morning break) and lunch, designed to allow staff to decide when to stop work and take time out. As well as spreading the load on catering facilities, it creates additional flexibility for teachers in planning lessons.

Corby Business Academy are starting with a system in which staff plan when to take breaks while accompanying their group. Breakfast and lunch are on a rolling programme with only half of one of the five faculties having a break at any one time.

Thomas Deacon Academy operate a 90 minute rolling lunchtime, built into their tutor base time in which every learner has 30 minutes for lunch, a 30 minute PSHE session and 30 minutes for academic tutoring.

Key issues
Some schools have been unable to make the short-term changes they would like in order to solve problems with accommodation and/or catering. This is one area that many schools with the opportunity of a new-build or major reorganisation of accommodation can make it easier for a school to innovate.
Reconfiguring the grouping of learners

While much debated and discussed, the practice of grouping learners either in mixed ability or in sets is well understood. Normal practice is for these groups to be tied to the age group cohorts in which young people transfer into and out of institutions.

This default, grouping learners by year leads to a wider spread of need and ability than can be accommodated by most schools, without an element of compromise. Moving to a more needs-led approach offers the possibility of a curriculum experience that is both more highly targeted to the needs of each learner and broader in its range of opportunities and challenges.

Mixed age teaching at key stage 3

It is very rare indeed to find examples of learners at key stage 3 grouped other than within their year cohort.

Schools that have introduced mixed age teaching at KS3 have done so in order to:

- Create populations of learners that can better be grouped by need
- Bring together learners who will benefit from a particular strategy into a group of sufficiently large numbers that it becomes cost-effective
- Allow learners to move to the levels of which they are capable of working when ready.

Bridgemary Community Sports College combine the upper ability band of one year group with the lower ability band of the year above to allow their subject leaders to create sets that span two age groups but with a less diverse spread of ability.

Ninestiles School organise some subject areas combined together (for example science and mathematics as ‘discovery’) and then timetable additional lessons for the subjects together over two year groups to allow for mixed-age sets organised by level.

Key issues

Removing one of the main factors in grouping learners – age – makes the importance of reliable data for other factors, in particular teacher assessment of level, absolutely critical. The alternative is that some students will become under or over promoted based on other factors.
Mixed age teaching at key stage 4
At key stage 4, as at key stage 3, it is almost universal practice to group learners within their year cohorts. In each annual cycle, options courses are planned and resourced according to demand within that group, and students allocated accordingly. Innovation in this area by moving to mixed age teaching is usually associated with also changing from two-year to one-year courses as the norm.

The constraint of limiting grouping at key stage 4 to learners of the same year group means that:

- Many schools operate small groups in some subjects at key stage 4 within different bands and years
- Students unable to get their chosen subjects in any given year are allocated second choices and no longer have the opportunity to study their ideal course while at school
- Many subjects are able to run only a single mixed-ability group each year, when ideally they would prefer to work in sets organised by ability.

At Serby Park B&E Learning Community, on two days there is a range of options available equally to all key stage 4 students. This allows the school greater flexibility to offer subjects with low uptake and reduced artificial barriers to learners wanting to take a particular course.

Ninestiles School also schedule mathematics and option blocks so that it is possible for mixed-age groups to be created where it is appropriate to do so, either to create a viable group, to pull together learners with similar needs or where it is felt that mixed age grouping will have a benefit for teaching & learning. They have found that although some students were worried about bullying from older students in a group, this hasn’t happened and indeed year 10s can act as role models which year 9s tend to follow and that year 10s are influenced by the competitive edge of working with mixed age students.

Key issues
Compressing options time at key stage 4 into a small part of the week can cause problems for other year groups, as it becomes difficult for them to access certain key resources at certain times of the week.

Mixed-age grouping at key stage 4 removes a major constraint on timetabling, potentially compensating for the additional constraint imposed by linking the school timetable to other schools and colleges in the area. It also reduces the need to run small groups in minority subjects in order to ensure breadth as less groups with more learners can be scheduled.
Reconfiguring the location of learning

Working across schools

In most schools the default for the great majority of their learners is that all programmed courses take place at the home school, with particular groups having arrangement made specially to accommodate needs – such as a college placement or a course at another school because a particular option is unavailable at home.

This limits the experiences offered to any learner to those that their home school can provide, is always at risk of problems caused by unforeseen staffing changes and makes the one-off arrangements for specific groups relatively complex to put in place.

The curriculum at St. Peter's Collegiate C of E School is essentially a traditional structure, however the local dimension to the curriculum in terms of collaboration is hugely significant. In recent years they have embarked on post-16 and an increasingly 14–19 cross-city collaboration across Wolverhampton, with the view to establishing a wide-ranging curriculum offer to all students. To structure this has involved the alignment of curriculum blocks across the city and two-day option blocks at key stage 4 for all schools. The school moved to a six-period day to facilitate this three years ago, which involves longer learning blocks (double and triple lessons) for all subjects. All the core subjects at key stage 3 teach a combination of doubles and singles, with singles for foundation subjects. The long learning blocks have acted as a catalyst to complete change in approach to teaching and learning, including open-ended investigations, coaching and mentoring and independent study involving a VLE, thus a structural shift to accommodate area wide collaboration, far from being a brake on innovation has been the lever that initiated it.

At Monks' Dyke Technology College the main emphasis has been on the introduction of more applied learning courses into the curriculum, not just at their own school but also in seven schools across the local area, which has no nearby further education provision.

A small number of post-16 and key stage 4 courses were introduced in September 2007, with the main changes taking effect from September 2008. Each individual school does not have the resources necessary to provide the breadth of curriculum which the students need and want, so as a group they successfully bid to the Learning and Skills Council for the capital funding needed to be spent in all the schools, and also on a brand new purpose built building which will be run by the consortium, not a single institution. As a group they have trialled some shared post-16 timetabling over the last two years and are increasing the number of shared courses from September 2008, with students and/or staff travelling between institutions.

The complexity of seven-way partnership developing a consortium approach to the curriculum has meant that they have had to develop new leadership structures to make the changes work. Monks’ Dyke formed an education improvement partnership, which identified the need and wrote the successful bid. This expanded beyond an original five schools to include FE providers, a university and business and work based learning representatives. They have formed a not for profit company which will have responsibility for the curriculum delivery in the new applied learning centre from September, and the management of the building and employment of staff. They now need to develop key stage 3 to support the changes at key stage 4. They have already introduced a ‘tools for learning’ course in years 7, 8 and 9, and are looking at flexible starts to GCSE courses. They will also move to mixed-age tutor groups in September 2008 and will be experimenting with mixed age teaching groups.

Alongside all these changes the school has had to restructure the senior team to support the headteacher’s role which is now often out of school. Governance is also being strengthened through a move to trust status. Such significant changes in the curriculum have both been made possible by, and required equally significant changes in the way schooling in the wider area is organised.
Key issues

Beyond the obvious practical problems in ensuring that scheduling between schools works well, there are a number of issues around linking quality assurance, assessment and reporting systems across organisations.

Many schools express the concern that a collaborative curriculum design potentially imposes a restriction on their freedom to adapt their local curriculum as they have added a new constraint to their timetabling systems. This will only be true when other parts of the school curriculum continue as before – a number of the Futures Vision schools used the change to area based working as the lever to stimulate a wider discussion and subsequent reorganisation of their curriculum.

Key stage 4 and 5 collaboration affects key stage 3 significantly by fixing the use of some limited resources in school (such as certain rooms or members of staff) to specific times in the week. This makes it doubly important to consider 11–14 and 14–19 curriculum issues as part of the same 11–19 design not independent ones.

Learning in the workplace

One default in the school curriculum that both teachers and learners strongly agree they would like to change relates to “learning things about the real world.” That may be learning through using the context of life outside school, or through the learning taking place in the workplace or community. Around the time of publication of this booklet, a substantial set of resources for learning outside the classroom will be released (see the web links section for the initial DCSF manifesto). Many schools have developed programmes that make both the community and workplace a real part of the curriculum for some or all of their learners. Within the futures vision schools a number of opportunities and solutions to some of the associated problems were identified.

Ringmer Community College have greatly increased flexibility programmes for students at key stage 4 over the past four years, with students travelling to learn at FE colleges, especially Plumpton Agricultural College, and students at key stage 4 having an increased use work placements each week. Quality assurance became a major drain on time for senior and middle leaders visiting work placements, leading to the college appointing a Flexible Work/Learning Co-ordinator who is a non-teacher. They place students across the county, and indeed joined the college with a wide network of contacts. They now lead on tracking students, quality assurance for placements and ensuring progression for students.

Education Village have used a similar system, having a full time director of community in their senior leadership team able to work with local employers and other community groups to coordinate activity that affects a number of groups of learners. This includes students who are in danger of permanent exclusion who work in a halfway-house arrangement with some mainstream and some off school provision including weekly apprenticeship challenges that work with local business who are engaged in longer term involvement in mentoring and work placements

Some schools such as Bridgernary Community Sports College and Serlby Park Business and Enterprise Learning Community have created spaces on their own site that realistically simulate the work environment, whether it be a construction site or a beauty salon. Both of these schools have also modified the way that their timetables are structured for learners in ways that mean that time away from the school site is not disruptive to their other areas of learning. At Bridgernary this is accomplished through the flexibility of the working day, with start and finish times moving towards individually planned programmes. Serlby Park groups related activity into two days each week when options and placements are scheduled.

Key issues

Ensuring that activity such as learning in the workplace meets the same standards for quality assurance, assessment and reporting, as well as the practical issues like safety, welfare and transport etc imposes a significant overhead, which needs to be planned for.
Learning online
Many of the Futures Vision schools were looking to online learning, whether it be to provide resources to complement project based learning, opportunities to complete some or all of a course through elearning or an augmentation of classroom practice. This includes the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) to allow learners more scope to work and access resources independently both within the planned curriculum time and outside it. It may be that this means using the VLE to bridge between short lessons, or to make better use of longer sessions.

Sometimes success in developing the use of a VLE was linked to a specific course or group of learners where it can be proven. For example De Ferrers Technology College has been able to develop its VLE to support transition work with its feeder primary schools for years 6 and 7 projects.

Learners at the National Extension College (NEC) are remotely based, being drawn from a wide range of schools. Very few learners ever visit NEC’s premises. Coursework assessments are carried out remotely, with telephone authentication. Each school enrolling learners is encouraged to have a named staff contact per subject who has a direct link to a member of the NEC support team. Parents enrolling children are provided, where possible, with guidance on supporting them through their NEC course. Learners have welcomed innovations in technology and schools see a partnership with specialist providers of this learning model as a means of extending subject choice and increasing flexibility.

Key issues
For all of the attention to elearning, and the development of learning platforms, very few of the Futures Vision schools felt that these technologies had fed through into major curriculum change – it being rather a case of new technologies supporting existing models and learning within them.

Reconfiguring the leadership of learning
Student leadership
Many of the Futures Vision schools identify student leadership as critically important as part of the process of redesigning the curriculum. What is less common, even in this group of innovative schools, are examples of where the design of the curriculum itself supports and nurtures student leadership.

Loxford School of Science and Technology begins key stage 3 with a very traditional range of subjects, which aim to give basic access to the curriculum higher up the school. The majority of their large multicultural EAL population of students enter with attainment below national standards. As they begin an overhaul of years 7–9, to blur key stages boundaries they are aiming to create students who need less hot-housing in key stage 4. This has included targeted development of the schools managed learning environment to extend learning pathways and the use of study time outside lessons. Subjects are collaborating in the online learning pathways with teachers, other adults and older students working as learning guides – not to dumb down lessons but rather to make them more fluid, with targeted inputs for different student groups. The curriculum design involves having to rethink what a good lesson is and to sell changes to all stakeholders.

Bridgemary Community Sports College have built student involvement into their curriculum review process with a panel of learners working with subject leaders to set the agenda for improvement in each subject area, covering matters ranging from the short term and operational to the long term direction of that part of the school.
Key issues

There is a major difference between planning to involve students in the design and operation of a school, and planning to involve them in the design and management of their own learning, although both are often referred to as student voice.

Similarly there is an important distinction to be made between the use of student voice in informing and shaping the design of the curriculum and designing a curriculum that supports to ongoing development of student voice in the co-construction and personalisation of learning.

Partners as teachers

The default structures for organising the school curriculum with learning organised into short lessons built around teachers, subjects and rooms make it difficult to make the best possible use of the wide range of other kinds of skills and experiences available to support learning. A number of the Futures Vision schools place a great deal of emphasis on broadening the range of adults able to work with young people in the curriculum rather than on its edge.

For example, Leasowes Community College effectively works with three different timetable models:

- One hour blocks for four days in the week
- Five hour blocks every Friday
- Longer blocks three times in the year; these vary between three days and a week, depending on the year group

The longer blocks are arranged for immersion in a subject or context for learning, which allows for other adults and professionals to work with students in a planned and authentic or realistic situation. From the perspective of the partner giving their time to work with learners, it provides opportunities to ensure they have both the satisfaction of achieving something of value and a structure that is simple to fit into.

It allows learning to be contextualised for students and provides models for assessment for learning without necessary reference to levels all of the time. The students gain experience and support, and opportunities for challenge and success. It provides models for giving experiences to students and support to ensure that intervention is effective and provides real opportunities for success and achievement whilst really challenging students intellectually.

Redbridge Community School have also made significantly more use of adults other than teachers with the learning experience at key stage 4, in particular, being enriched by their introduction in areas such as art, music and physical education. For example, their music technician adds enormous value to the school’s BTEC programme through his current knowledge of music technology and experience of the music industry.

Biddenham Upper School take the partnership model even further in a radical approach to their alternative curriculum for “Fishies,” students would previously have been educated by their parents at home but who are now on Biddenham’s roll. The local authority funding for these young people is placed into a special fund, which pays for a coordinator and resources to help these students learn and meet statutory requirements for their curriculum. Parents register their children morning and afternoon as being ‘available for education’ and report attendance to the school on a weekly basis. Some of the resources are used to employ a highly skilled learning support assistant based at Bedford Central Library. The way that the curriculum is delivered for each child is negotiated between the student, their parents and a coordinating committee of parents that allocates resources. Starting with 17 students three years ago, there are now over 100 enrolled for this alternative partnership-led approach to curriculum delivery.

Key issues

Curriculum models can sometimes make it difficult for partners to support the curriculum, particularly the way time is managed for the learners in question.
Further reading

The following publications are useful resources in looking both at curriculum design and innovation. Most are available for free download from www.ssatrust.org.uk/curriculumdesign or elsewhere as stated.

*Curriculum Design, Introductory Guide* (SSAT). An overview of a range of practice in designing the curriculum, accompanied by a number of examples from English secondary schools.

*Deep Experience 2: Rethinking Key stage 3* (Kai Vacher, SSAT)

*Essential Questions for the Future School* (Futures Vision, SSAT)

*Leading Curriculum Innovation* (NCSL and QCA). A number of case studies from primary, secondary and special schools.

*One World, One School* (Futures Vision, SSAT)

*System Redesign 1* (Prof David Hargreaves, SSAT)

*System Redesign 3* (Guy Shearer, Kai Vacher and Professor David Hargreaves, SSAT)

*Pupils’ experiences and perspectives of the national curriculum and assessment: final report for the research review* (Pippa Lord Megan Jones, NFER) Research Review conducted for Qualifications and Curriculum Authority May 2006 (available from QCA website for download)

*A condensed key stage 3: Designing a flexible curriculum 2006 update* (Ref: 0259-2006DCL-EN) Secondary National Strategy/ DCSF/ QCA

Links on the web

The first point of reference for the new secondary curriculum, including information, examples of practice and a wide range of related publications from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority: www.qca.org.uk/curriculum/

The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust website for school curriculum designers can be found at: www.ssatrust.org.uk/curriculumdesign

The National College for School Leadership website for school leaders dealing with 11–19 curriculum design issues and the national programme of support for curriculum design is at: www.ncsl.org.uk/11–19

CfBT have produced a website to support subject leaders in the foundation subjects in developing their response to the new secondary curriculum at: www.newsecondarycurriculum.org

National Strategies have published a website to support subject leaders in English, mathematics, science and ICT in working with the new secondary curriculum at: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/secondary/frameworks/

The RSA Opening Minds programme is described at: www.thersa.org/projects/education/opening-minds

The Innovation Unit project on resourcing personalisation has a number of curriculum related examples of practice: www.innovation-unit.co.uk

A number of schools in the UK have shown great interest in the Queensland New Basics curriculum project which is detailed on the web here education.qld.gov.au/corporate/newbasics

Within this publication, several schools make reference to the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme, which is presented at: www.ibo.org/myp

The Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto at publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/LOTC.pdf is a useful starting point for discussion about broadening the curriculum to the whole planned learning experience.

Design for Success sets out a range of examples for designing the curriculum to incorporate the new diploma. As well as providing a useful overview, the booklet and accompanying examples touch on many of the same ideas explored here. www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/Design-for-success.pdf

www.vitalhub.net is a website that builds on the work mentioned by some of the schools in this publication around ELLI set up by ViTaL Partnerships Ltd (ViTaL), a charitable trading company created in 2004 to handle the spin-off work from research into Values Development and Learning Power – through the ELLI Project – led by Dr Ruth Deakin Crick at the University of Bristol’s Graduate School of Education.
This Appendix contains the papers presented by colleagues at the Futures Vision think tank ‘Curriculum Design: Disciplined Innovation in Practice.’
Accrington Moorhead Sports College
Andy O’Brien, Deputy Head

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

It is important to stress that our school has specifically focused on ensuring pedagogy and curriculum are joined and thought of in the context of ‘what will our students need to look like at the end of all this?’ To this end:

• Currently our curriculum sees a thematic and skills based approach in year 7, ‘Exciting minds through SPORT’. All subjects contribute to the delivery of each of the six modules through either discrete or cross curricular schemes of work. Each module has a whole school skill focus and ends with a whole year event/project

• A learn to learn course runs as a discrete subject throughout key stage 3. The course aims to specifically develop individual, team and thinking skill attributes

• A number of early entry qualifications run in year 9.

In key stage 4, all students take an applied subject and two options. These are organised into five progression pathways such as ‘health’.

A strong consortium helps to fill area and school learning gaps.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

Results wise we are in the top 5% VA schools in the country. We are at 61% 5A*-C from 17% in 2004. Internal measures of exclusions and classroom support demonstrate significant reduction. Hence conclusions about positive learning atmosphere and engagement of students can be drawn.

‘The culture and ethos of the school have been transformed’ OFSTED

The school has moved from 87 out of 203 first choices to being oversubscribed in 2007.

Where next for your school?

2008 sees some big curriculum changes:

• Development of our skills based curriculum into year 8

• New applied taster blocks in the core year 9 curriculum

• The identification of four ability pathways through the curriculum from year 7 onwards. This will include accreditation routes beginning in year 8 for some students

• We are leading the implementation of the Diploma in Creative and Media for September 2008

• We are introducing Young Apprentice courses.
A radical alternative curriculum (which we believe is unique to Biddenham) is the ‘Fishies’. These are students who are educated by their parents at home. Nevertheless, they are on Biddenham’s roll and we draw down the appropriate local authority funding for them and place it into a special fund, which pays for a coordinator and resources to help these students learn and meet statutory requirements for their curriculum. Money is spent on things as diverse as private tuition, linguaphone courses, revision books, dance studio hire and museum trips. Parents register their children morning and afternoon as being ‘available for education’ and tell us the attendance on a weekly basis.

Some of the money is used to employ a highly skilled learning support assistant who is based at Bedford Central Library to assist our Fishy students (she also helps with another scheme for students who would otherwise be excluded).

The way that the curriculum is delivered for each child is negotiated between the student, their parents and a coordinating committee of parents that allocates resources.

This is an innovative experiment; it started with 17 students three years ago and there are now over 100. Nevertheless, there are more than 200 students in Bedfordshire (and they are only the ones we know about) who have not joined our scheme, despite the fact that these students attract zero funding to support their education. We worry that these students might be suffering from educational equivalents of neglect and abuse.

**What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?**

We’ve had some good exam results from the Fishies although some of the students who achieved these results were so young that we are still waiting to feel the CVA benefit. On the other hand the Fishies inevitably distort our attendance figures. A few Fishies have joined the school (all but one joining the sixth form).

**Where next for your school?**

More fully develop quality assurance in the Fishies programme and give them greater access to our mainstream curriculum via our developing VLE.
How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

We believe that quality development of skills/competences enables more effective access to subject content and thus will enable greater engagement and independence in those courses accredited. We believe that the tension occurs more around key stage 3 assessment and functional elements of GCSEs.

Our curriculum is at:

- **Key stage 3:** a PLTS based curriculum in year 7 based around developing our principles of thinking, language and communication and emotional and social learning. We ask teachers to use the uniqueness of their subjects to put a context around the development of skills. This is achieved through extended blocks of time and through learning teams.
- **Key stage 4:** personalisation is focused on pathways, partnership and a variety of approaches (including the lead for a Diploma line). We are part of an embedding project to embed key skills (core and wider) into key stage 4 (English, ICT, mathematics and science).

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

- Collaborative approaches to planning and delivery
- Partnership
- Creative enquiry focused learning design
- Cultural change
- Leadership capacity
- Greater use of ICT.

Where next for your school?

- **Key stage 3:** year 8 and beyond
- **Key stage 4:** building blocks of professional development?, COPE, key skills into pathways extending to Diplomas
- Increased collaboration and partnership.
- Virtual options.
How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

For the past two years we have been engaged in redesigning key stage 3. In September 2006 we created a year 7, which gives access to both subject knowledge and PLTS. The remaining 21 periods are spent in extended blocks of learning time where the focus is on students developing personal learning and thinking skills. These blocks are:

- **Challenge Time**: Students are set a ‘challenge’, which they work in teams to solve – Runs for a four period block with the whole year group
- **Tutor Time**: Runs for three double and one single period. Starts the week with ‘big picture’ and ends with a celebration assembly
- **Talk Time**: Based in modern foreign languages, emphasises language learning skills to boost students’ literacy
- **Team Time**: Based in PE – adapted from JSLA/Step Into Sport – allows students to take responsibility for their own learning and that of their peers. Two double blocks
- **Express Time**: Based in expressive arts but emphasis on project based work which combines different art forms as appropriate one triple block.

### Year 7 Curriculum

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Year 8 2007

Talk time and team time carry over. New blocks are still not conventional subjects and there is still a strong focus on PLTS, but greater emphasis on subject-specific skills/content.

- Design/deliver: technology based project work combining a variety of disciplines
- Disasters and dilemmas: humanities based project work
- Dreams: expressive arts based project work combining art forms
- Discovery: more advanced form of challenge time. Organised to allow crossover projects between years 7 and 8.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

- More engagement by learners with the curriculum and greater satisfaction as expressed through student surveys and student voice
- Improved student self esteem
- Evidence that students are now better team workers
- Improved attendance.

Where next for your school?

Need to re-engineer the year 9 curriculum to acknowledge/minimise possible tension between development of PLTS and working to further improve SATs scores for our learners.
Bridgemary Community Sports College  
Richard Carlyle, Vice Principal

The way we deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations has changed radically with the development of our new curriculum model.

At key stage 3 we combine the upper ability band of each year group with the lower ability band of the year above to allow subject leaders to create sets that span two age groups but with a less diverse spread of ability.

We have built student involvement into the curriculum review process with a panel of learners working with subject leaders to set the agenda for improvement in each subject area, covering matters ranging from the short term and operational to the long term direction of that part of the school.

A pattern of either early or late starts was made available to new key stage 4 students in our school. Sufficient numbers took up the offer of an early session that now several groups of students in the core subjects are able to begin school at 7.30am and on some days finish earlier. The demand for places is limited by our ability to create viable sized sets at present, however it has proven popular with both staff and students and is being extended to later sessions and a wider group of learners.

What has been the impact of the changes you've made in recent years?

• Improved learner engagement
• Wider curriculum provision
• More personalised learning
• Improved attendance
• More creative deployment of staff to improve services
• Improved satisfaction from stakeholders.
In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

Key stage 3 – one size fits all; due for change (see below)

Key stage 4

• We offer a minimum core curriculum to enable maximum choice for our learners
• We have an emerging pre-applied learning pathway, BTEC in Childcare, which includes off-site work placements; also college placements for construction and hair and beauty
• We’ve introduced new courses such as DIDA, financial studies
• We have a personal development programme for all key stage 4 students that includes PSHE/citizenship, work related learning, ECDL, minimum RE requirement, plus a range of options for individual options. Several choices are off-site, including local sports clubs and gymnasia. Several choices are offered on-site by other organisations such as self-defence, first aid.

Post-16

• We offer a broad range of A-levels plus BTEC Childcare
• We have no tutor groups or form tutors. Instead students register biometrically, and then go straight to lessons. Students have a half-hour session with their mentor every six weeks

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

At key stage 4, students have more choice, more personalised pathways. However, more children off-site and attending work placements brings greater complexities of planning.

Where next for your school?

Key stage 3

From Sept 2008, new curriculum, which brings humanities, music, drama, art, technology and ICT into two generic subjects areas called: Perform and Create. Three weeks each year for special projects. Home base staffed by primary-trained teachers so students can access additional literacy and numeracy support, according to individual need.

Key stage 4

More coherent applied learning pathway

Post-16

Adding BTEC first Diploma in public services. Possibly two of the new Diplomas in 2009 (IT and business, administration and finance)
City Academy Bristol
Rebecca Pearce, Vice Principal, Curriculum Design and Innovation

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

During year 7 our curriculum focuses largely on developing young people’s habits as more effective learners. For one day a week (two 180-minute sessions) students experience project based learning approaches through ‘project 7’. This experience aims to develop their ability to think for themselves, question critically and have confidence in their own views, as well as ensuring that all students are more willing to take risks and adapt their thinking and learning to different situations.

The programme aims to develop students’ co-operative skills, where they are able to develop the habits of working effectively with others, sharing ideas, listening, considering alternative viewpoints and building on their own and others’ ideas. The aim is to develop a curriculum that ensures that students become partners in learning, where they are consulted regularly and encouraged to think about how they learn best.

For the rest of their week students learn through other curriculum areas with a dual focus on developing learning habits, as well as developing the key concepts and processes for each subject. This dual focus continues throughout years 8 and 9 as well.

Some joint collaborative projects between different curriculum areas take place on focus days/weeks throughout the year.

Where next for your school?

We are redesigning our curriculum to begin to better meet more personalised needs of learners.

Our curriculum will aspire to develop a wide range of personal, learning and thinking skills through a wide variety of activities that are interconnected. Opportunities for in-depth study, which involve practical, investigative approaches, where skills are applied within learning experiences will be a key feature of the curriculum.

The curriculum will be designed around a project-oriented learning programme that will incorporate cross curricular projects shaped around ten themes through the year.

Projects will be designed to develop personal learning and thinking skills through the different planned learning challenges. Key aspects of the national curriculum will be mapped out across the year. The cross curricular approach will aim to make meaningful connections between the subjects.

In years 8 and 9 students will experience learning through ‘village’ experiences, where curriculum time is blocked together for each learning village to plan and coordinate as they wish, for example a student may go to the village ‘learning through research’, where they will experience maths and science related learning for different lengths of time, depending on the activity designed such as a whole morning on science related activities one week and collaborative activities the next.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

The impact across the school is difficult to judge at this early stage, as we are only in the second year of development. Students’ skills in a variety of personal learning and thinking skills are more advanced as a result of learning experiences in year 7 and they are able to apply these habits in a variety of situations.
The Compton
Louise Taylor, Assistant Headteacher

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

We have introduced a staggered break and lunch system. This means that we have a rolling programme of breaks and lunches; students go to break or lunch according to a timetable that is based around subjects being taught. At break or lunchtime approximately one third of students will be out at one time, while the other two thirds are still in lessons.

What has been the impact of the changes you've made in recent years?

We avoid having the whole school community on break or lunch at the same time; this ensures a more calm and ordered atmosphere. The day starts and finishes early, with the first break at 9.40am and the first lunch at 11.40am. This means that most of the learning is done in the early part of the day when students are more fresh. Fewer incidents occur at lunchtime because the break is short; students have time to eat and get some fresh air. Students feel safer and more secure. The day finishes early (2.50pm) and staff have more time for planning.

Where next for your school?

We have reviewed the breaks and lunch system and our school community are wholly positive. Our next steps involve considering staggering lesson times with the possibility that key stage 4 students might come into school later.
Corby Business Academy
Lorraine Smith/Geri Rowe, Vice Principal

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

The new building has been designed as two-storey faculty ‘pods’ off a central mall. Subject areas have been grouped together into five faculties each being accommodated in its own pod.

Each faculty is run by a Vice Principal. Having the faculty pods allows a new approach to timetabling, where student, subject and location are fixed so the staffing needs to fit the timetable. This is a move away from traditional methods where the available staff dictate the timetable model.

Our model has each year group (7–11) spending a morning and an afternoon per week in each faculty – roughly six hours. The division of these two slots is then decided by the faculty vice principal in conjunction with directors of subject, with due regard to statutory requirements. This reduces movement around the building at any given time, and allows for deep learning rather than fleeting encounters.

The curriculum is driven by skills rather than content, and planned to deliver progression (see diagram below). Core literacy, numeracy and enterprise skills are being mapped across key stage 3.

Each faculty is also a base for a year group and their tutors. Sixth form tutor groups are distributed amongst the key stage 3 bases, so sixth formers can act as mentors and role models for lower school students.

Breakfast and lunch are on a rolling programme with only half a faculty having a break at one time.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

So far, the main impact has been with the staff of our predecessor school. There are two main groups: those who are keen to take up the challenge of new ways of working, and those who view the changes with some trepidation. Transition activities and sharing of the planning at each stage is starting to help with this. The students on the whole are thoroughly excited about the Academy, but mainly concerned with having a locker!

Where next for your school?

• Opening on schedule in September and seeing if it works!
• Then vertical groupings of students – moving to stage not age.

TIMETABLE 2008–9

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De Ferrers Specialist Technology College
Mike York, Principal

What have you done, and how, to lead the changes necessary to redesign your curriculum?

We have made a major move towards personalising learning (PL) over the last 3–5 years. This has involved a complete restructuring of our leadership structure to accommodate the nine gateways and four deep areas (deep learning, support, experience and leadership). Since September 2006, all leadership posts in the college contribute to PL.

Alongside this there has been a reconfiguration of the college to allow changes to take place e.g. blurring of key stages, breaking down the academic/pastoral divide, culture of innovation, distributed leadership, more creative use of time and space restructuring the CPD programme, etc. together with a huge investment in new technologies and our virtual learning environment to enhance learning and development of whole-college data system to aid personalising learning.

Curriculum changes driven by personalised learning

- Personalised pathways
- Primary approaches introduced into key stage 3
- Two year key stage 3 for some students.
- Learning to learn in key stage 3
- Electronic individual learning plans introduced.
- GCSEs in some subjects started in year 9; while others completed in year 9 creating additional time for triple science, enterprise and critical thinking in years 10 and 11
- New options, particularly applied learning, introduced in key stage 4 pathways
- Focus on information, advice and guidance
- Key stage 5 pathways revised to include International Baccalaureate alongside A-level from September 2008. Increased applied and level 2 options within pathways, offering the flexibility to mix and match.

How have you led those changes?

- New structures in place to allow greater innovation, creativity, flexibility of leadership
- All staff focused on PL and raising levels of achievement.

Where next for your school?

We are moving into a major review of key stage 3:

- Competency curriculum to be introduced from September 2008 as a pilot with three groups of year 7 students. Roll out of a programme based on Opening Minds from 2009
- Existing pathways to continue in a modified form – primary based approach extended
- Whole college reading initiative.

Key stage 5 (see above)

- New pathways including IB Diploma from September 2008
- Expansion of applied learning opportunities to match key stage 4 pathways
- Greater awareness of contextual value added as a measure of success and, with this, a greater importance in matching student courses to student needs

In years 10 and 11 pre and post college time, currently devoted to providing AS courses for students, might need to be redirected towards gaining IB certificated courses.

1 See page 30 for further information about the requirements for early entry to end of key stage 3 tests.
Estover Community College
Graham Browne, Principal

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

We were developing an Opening Minds based curriculum model at key stage 3 but decided to stop when we found we had become a BSF Pathfinder school, reasoning that the change in physical space and wider school organisation represented a tremendous opportunity to make deeper changes than those we had felt able to implement initially.

We are concerned about new school designs that are still essentially boxes along corridors, thinking that if they aren’t significantly changing the pattern of school buildings away from the current model then just remodelling the existing site would be a better use of public money.

Although we are moving to cross-phase organisation, not all our intake at key stage 3 will come from our own key stage 2 and this seems to be a difficulty we have seen in other schools developing a 5–18 through-school model.

Key innovations include a foundation degree, early entry specialist exam provision and joint key stage 2 & 3 work.

How have you led those changes?

We have made our changes to date through a delicate combination of putting highly innovative people in place, letting them get on with the job but work closely with the head and leadership team for support and challenge. Estover has a very distributed influence and innovation team (I & I), which places heavy demands on low key but sharp control and direction mechanisms.

Where next for your school?

• We are moving to a new integrated campus bringing together five schools – secondary, primary, special, hospital and children’s centre. We are looking to use the cross-phase link to develop key stage 2 and key stage 3 working together closely, supporting key stage 3 students as they lead and teach themselves, with the same pattern emerging between key stage 3 and key stage 4
• We’re planning for re-engineered learning around a problem solving curriculum firing off a small-school system where students work in small teams in highly flexible spaces and systems
• The success of our new campus will hinge around distributed leadership, student leadership and a curriculum commissioning structure dependent upon teachers
• A key feature will be para-teachers and commercial partners working closely together.
Gable Hall reviews and changes its curriculum annually according to the needs of cohorts of students. Hence the key stage 3 curriculum will reflect the needs of the incoming year 6 and the key stage 4 curriculum will reflect the needs of those students who are due to access it.

The year 7 curriculum accommodates three different cohorts of students, Routes A, B and C.

- Route A is followed by the top four sets and covered in 51 hours per fortnight over a two-year period
- Route B is followed by the next four sets and these students cover the curriculum in 51 hours per fortnight over a three-year period
- Route C is followed by the final set and covers 50 periods per fortnight. These students cover most of key stage 3 in one year and move on to some key stage 4 courses for the following four years
- The provision for English, mathematics and other subjects varies according to route and according to individual sets within routes
- This year 7 curriculum changes in year 8 and in year 9 again according to route and/or set within the route.

The key stage 4 curriculum is again tailored to cohort need and requirement. It and enables vertical teaching routes and a variety of guided learning pathways (see table below).

### Key stage 4 option choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice 1: Lang/Tech</th>
<th>Choice 2: Arts/Hums</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphics</td>
<td>Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMT</td>
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<td>Food</td>
<td>Drama</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Textiles</td>
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<td>Fast PE</td>
<td>History</td>
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### Applied qualifications (level 2 unless stated)

- GCSE German with Bus. App (V I only)
- French with Bus.App (V I Y only)
- Applied Art GCSE
- Travel & Tourism (BTEC)
- Health & Social Care (BTEC)
- Performing Arts – Dance (BTEC)
- Performing Arts – Technical (BTEC)
- ICT (BTEC)
- Sport (BTEC)
- Public Services (BTEC)
- Retail (BTEC)
- CACHE
- College Courses Hairdressing (level 1/2)
- Construction (BTEC)
- Motor Vehicle Studies (IMI)(level 1)
- Craft Occupations (C & G) (level 1)

The curriculum is co-constructed by stakeholders and interested parties – students, i.e. students, teachers, support staff and governors. It is co-evaluated by the same people and is co-delivered by teachers, HLTAs and students. Gable Hall is entering an exciting and dynamic period where, through collaboration with a range of external providers, a more diverse curriculum is planned to provide for the needs of a greater range of students.
Heartlands High School
Marie Smith, Deputy Head

We want independent learners, so the last thing we want some teachers to do, is to sit pupils in a desk with a worksheet. If we want pupils to have enquiring minds who can think for themselves, we need to set activities which have a better chance of achieving that outcome. We need to present problems/ideas to the children, rather than solutions/answers, and build in experiences that challenge the pupils to think. A focus on the skills we wish the learner to acquire as opposed to the content of the lesson.

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

- We became a specialist sports college: Sports became part of the core, with all pupils taking a PE qualification, and having extended opportunities after school
- We used data to enhance the ways we targeted intervention
- We organised key stage 4 into three broad bands, and provided different menu/pathways for students. The most able were offered accelerated GCSEs triple science, other pathways included fewer GCSEs for some students, or more time given to a GCSE and different courses, eg ASDAN, BTECs, Applied Art, DIDA. We introduced a year 7 induction project themed approach involving all departments and pupils, which followed the year 6 transition project. This included an emphasis on interactive lessons, using different learning styles, developing pupils’ skills as a learner, reinforcing expectations, AfL and appropriate homework
- We emphasised embedding assessment for learning
- We developed our extended school provision
- We developed our careers programme, ECM/citizenship programme, and student voice.

How have you led those changes?

We looked at the needs of the learner and developed a ‘can do’ culture with both staff and pupils. We needed to focus on CPD and developing capacity within the school, providing various training opportunities including developing middle leaders through programmes like leading from the middle and NPQH. Changes in leadership led to significant improvements within school. (‘Good and improving’, Ofsted 2006).

Where next for your school?

- We will continue to develop the range of qualifications/applied learning pathways in key stage 4
- We will block curriculum areas and groups of students in key stage 3 to allow flexibility, collaboration and cohesion. If we block subjects together and block students together in half year groups, it would be possible for some departments to move away from the one hour lessons, work together on a theme/topic/skill, take the pupils out, and deliver the curriculum in a different way or in a different area – not just inside the classroom
- We will continue to review our year 7 curriculum, seeking to develop the themes and skills approach. Blocking subjects together will give greater flexibility of time, facilitate collaboration and allow a more innovative and creative approach in delivery. We will seek cohesion across the curriculum and develop PLTS
- We expect to develop the use of alternative curriculum days, each with a focus on a theme or skill
- We plan to explore how SEAL can support the curriculum and develop confident learners
- We are developing a VLE for subject delivery, using ICT to support learning and teaching
- We are using specialism to increase engagement and participation
- If the school becomes an Academy the design of the building and learning spaces will have a considerable impact on learning and teaching.
High Storrs School
Michael Chapman, Headteacher

What have you done, and how, to lead the changes necessary to redesign your curriculum?

Imagine a school that has been newly refurbished through a £27 million BSF investment with bespoke facilities for all areas of the curriculum, excellent student and staff learning facilities, high quality student and staff social areas and a technology-rich design that has been directly informed by curriculum and pastoral structures. Within this school, staff are organised into faculties with collaborative curriculum delivery that moves beyond a subject based approach to learning. Students see their curriculum as a whole, with consistent practice across the school and planned curricular linkages between the development of learning skills and problem solving, as well as subject content.

There will be opportunities for a personalised pathway for each student, with such choice improving motivation. This will be underpinned by an innovative vertical pastoral model that will encourage peer learning, mentoring and support within a school cultural ethos where learning and achievement are the norm and are considered ‘cool’. A team of people will hold whole-school roles to provide planned bridges between faculties and vertical houses, further aiding consistency in quality.

A bespoke, personalised curriculum based upon stage not age with acceleration, breadth and depth will aid meaningful achievement for all. Innovative teaching and learning that is truly challenging for all abilities and is of a consistently high quality across the curriculum will lead to improved outcomes, behaviour and motivation to learn.

All teachers will take an overview of the progress of each child across the whole curriculum and not just in a series of compartmentalised subjects. All learning will have planned synergy and progression. It will be informed by an international, global understanding within a context of multiculturalism and respect.

This is not a naïve description of Educational Nirvana. With the changes and vision we have embarked upon at High Storrs, this vision really is within our grasp as the next three years unfold.

I have described in outline a true learning community.
What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

• The introduction of bilingual sections: French/English (from 1993) and German/English (from 2000)
• Offering the IB Diploma (1998)
• Bringing in an increasing emphasis on culture holism
• Introducing the IB Middle Years Programme (from 2005).

How have you led these changes?

1. Vision
2. Need/desperation/lack of risk aversion
3. Autonomy/innovation/link with motivation/ownership
4. Synergy with staff recruitment/retention/development
5. Convergence of educational and business development

Where next for your school?

Creativity – components/intuition/blink/uncertainty
Hornsea School and Language College
Ron Newey, Head

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

- RE/geography/history taught together as humanities in year 7
- Art/drama/dance/music taught as GCSE Expressive Arts in year 9
- GCSEs introduced into year 9 and year 10
- AS introduced into year 11
- Two-year key stage 3 in modern foreign languages (MFL)
- Early entry GCSEs in mathematics, English, Languages, RE and ICT.

How have you led those changes?

- By encouraging middle leaders to take risks
- Creating capacity by doing away with non-teaching and learning-related matters, e.g. meetings
- By involving our students
- By encouraging networking for our school to share and test its own ideas with others and bring in new ideas from outside.

Where next for your school?

- We will review our key stage 3 to involve a more skills-based approach
- We will bring in greater flexibility with less prescription at key stage 4.

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2 See page 30 for further information about the requirements for early entry to end of key stage 3 tests.
How does your school design the curriculum to give access both the subjects and competences?

Historically the curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of the learners. Attaining technology college status in 1996 enabled us to revise the curriculum in light of our redefined values and aims. A second applied learning specialism in 2006 has charged us with the need to look again at the diet we provide for our learners. The learners are predominately kinaesthetic and visual learners. Therefore, applied learning courses have been adopted to meet their needs.

Currently, we have not provided pathways such as the academic or applied learning route but have allowed all learners to choose either academic or applied courses. Each type of course is seen to hold the same status and as a consequence applied courses are not seen as the poor relation. In some instances, the applied learning qualification is seen as the desired qualification for that subject, eg NVQ in Hospitality and Catering.

All learners study applied ICT courses. Mixing and matching courses has been a driver in raising standards and achievement.

The revised curriculum and the onset of new school through BSF provide an opportunity to look at moving the school towards our ideal school experience, where learners, parents, staff, and the local community feel invigorated and valued. Evaluation in terms of what is working and what has become restrictive will generate pathways and opportunities appropriate to us. It is clear that the current curriculum is restrictive and doesn’t work for many of our students. We need to embrace the future:

• We need to enable learners to follow their dreams
• Learners learn in ways which are very different to the methods by which we were taught
• Future lives are very dependent on new technologies
• The way they will work, live and play is something we can dream about
• We owe each and every one of them the best we can provide.
Kingstone School
Matthew Milburn, Headteacher

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both the subjects and competencies?

Teachers at Kingstone have worked with Creative Partnerships to develop a year 7 course that encourages pupils to have a much greater say in what and how they study.

Cultural studies uses a pedagogical approach that has its roots in arts education and that enables pupils to live out and explore key moments that expose universal understandings. It currently covers content traditionally taught in history, geography, ICT, RE, drama and PHSE. What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

Research has established that the course, now in its fourth year, has been successful in improving attitudes to learning and relationships. It has also significantly improved the way in which colleagues teach and engage pupils in learning.

Where next for your school?

We are now developing an assessment model that tests both understanding of subject knowledge and understanding of self. Pupils prepare e-portfolios that enable them to demonstrate their knowledge and then answer questions in a meeting attended by parents and peers, around their ability to solve problems, work in a team and self evaluate.
Lawrence Sheriff School  
Annabel Kay, Deputy Headteacher

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

As part of our curriculum redesign we have reorganised the school day, pupil groups, curriculum provision and tutoring arrangements. We have embarked upon a flexible two-year key stage 3 (with SATS taken in year 9). In key stage 4 students follow differing pathways depending on their ability. These include in ICT, for example, choice between GCSE, DiDA, Applied ICT or AS Computing. Other subjects offer foundation courses or more than one qualification.

We have also changed the school day to start immediately with lessons at 8:50 am, with assemblies at the end of the day and we have an enrichment slot in the middle of the morning during which mixed age groups take part in over 70 clubs run by both teaching and non teaching staff, sixth formers and members of the local community. We have also introduced vertical tutor groups based upon house groups and these have an extended tutor period three times each week.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

• Students are much more motivated as they have a personalised curriculum, that they have opted to follow
• Behaviour has greatly improved as enrichment offers them a quality break in the middle of the morning. Staff also enjoy the change of activity
• Results have significantly improved at all key stages
• Mentoring takes place automatically in the vertical tutor groups and has grown a culture of community within the school.

Where next for your school?

We are looking at more flexible curriculum time to meet the specific needs of departments. Some departments prefer less frequent but longer blocks of time, while other departments such as Languages need very regular but shorter blocks. We are also looking at the introduction of ‘depth days’, where students will spend the whole day on one activity or project.
Leasowes Community College
John Howells, Principal

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

Effectively we use three different timetable models:

- One hour blocks for four days in the week
- Five hour blocks every Friday
- Longer blocks three times in the year. These vary between three days and one week sessions, depending upon the year group.

The longer blocks are arranged to create immersion in a subject or context for learning. It allows for other adults and professionals to work with students in a planned and authentic or realistic situation. It allows learning to be contextualised for students and provide models for assessment for learning without necessary reference to levels all of the time. It provides models for giving experiences to students and support to ensure that intervention is effective and provides real opportunities for success and achievement.

It provides opportunity to challenge students intellectually.

Students extend their learning outside the school day and support one another in their learning. A model of output, presentation or artefact production is usual and collaborative constructivist approaches can be used.

The model of support for students with learning and behavioural or emotional issues has moved forward. We now deploy pastoral support offers to work with students as well as our classroom assistants. They can work with staff and students in the bigger blocks to change student and staff behaviour.

Using this approach we are moving to a two-year key stage 3 and a three-year key stage 4. We are working to make year 11 a year when students can move to truly personalise their curriculum once they have achieved targets in their courses at GCSE through year 10 and early in year 11. We use the model already to a limited extent for all students in year 11 across two option blocks. Students effectively buy their time in year 11 if they have successfully completed courses in year 10 and additional opportunities are on offer to extend their subjects, alternatively revision, coursework or additional help in subjects are available.

This has been successful for students so far. They express a clear liking for larger blocks of time for learning. Staff response is also favourable and evaluation by Ofsted and Dominic Wyse has shown this.

Relationships between students and staff and students and students have improved and behaviour in larger blocks of time is regarded as better. Staff commitment to students’ success comes through more easily with this model and both see benefits from the knowledge that staff gain about students during these blocks.

The increase in opportunities for virtual learning means we can extend the opportunities for personalisation further with this model in the future. We can also see how the year 11 model can impact on our ideas for delivery in the curriculum for earlier years.

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3 See page 30 for further information about the requirements for early entry to end of key stage 3 tests.
Longfield School
Calvin Kipling and Susan Johnson, Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher

Longfield is an 11–16 secondary school with 910 pupils. In 2004 we achieved Sports College status.

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

Following a whole school curriculum review in 2006, we introduced many changes to our curriculum. These changes included major shifts in the way we deploy people, organise learners into groups and divide time. Due to the age of our building we have been limited with location options, but have introduced minor changes here too.

People:
• We have introduced an Opening Minds course in year 7, which has meant that our HLTAs and teaching staff are often working out of their comfort zones
• Staff teaching options are now working with mixed age groups at key stage 4
• We have worked in partnerships with local schools to introduce and extend opportunities in our curriculum for Russian, Chinese and drama.

Learner groups:
• Mixed-ability grouping has been introduced for Opening Minds in year 7
• New routes have been introduced at key stage 4 to cater for different profiles of learner
• Our key stage 4 options are now taught in mixed age groups.

Time:
• Our option blocks are now organised as two 4-hour sessions to allow more opportunities for deep learning
• The Opening Minds course uses one full day and two 2-hour blocks to allow for competency curriculum and project based work
• For enrichment we collapse our normal time table for two weeks to allow visits, additional qualifications, catch-up, gifted and talented activities, extension work etc.

Location:
• We have established a specific year 7 transition curriculum and Opening Minds block
• Within our key stage 4 routes system, route 3 students work at a local college
• We are making more use of out of hours learning and enriching the curriculum through a number of ICT developments.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?
• Our curriculum now meets the needs of more of our learners more of the time – with an impact on behaviour/exclusion/engagement
• Learners now have improved flexibility, particularly in key stage 4
• Transition into year 7 is now greatly improved
• Attainment has improved.

Where next for your school?
• The structure of the school day will need revision
• We are considering how we might develop our competence/PLTS approach to the curriculum into year 8
• We will extend access to one of our pathways all the way to year 7.
Loxford School of Science and Technology
Andrew Bainbridge, Deputy Headteacher

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

We begin key stage 3 with a very traditional range of subjects, which aim to give basic access to the curriculum higher up the school. The majority of our large multicultural EAL population of students enter with attainment below national standards. We regroup students at various times in key subjects – eg, booster classes in mathematics during the first six weeks before setting. A second modern foreign language is offered to higher ability students in years 8 and 9. One member of staff teaches this alongside the original language. They switch between languages as the students progress.

Off timetable events support non-subject skills e.g. work related learning (WRL)/citizenship/teambuilding. From year 9 more subjects are blocked across year groups to allow different pathways, eg science offered as triple, double, BTEC and single. Students can move within the groups.

Key stage 3/4 transition is blurred with content taught across this e.g. Key stage 4 ICT begins in year 9 until the end of year 10. Key stage 4 and 5 option blocks promote learning pathways, e.g. Creative @ post-16 with art, media, photography, drama and design technology. Our three year sixth form is based on stage not age approach throughout.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

There has been a rise of 35 to 75% in our key stage 4 results and high CVA (1056) putting us into the top 5% of similar schools.

We have an expanding sixth form population with an achievement culture that extends throughout the school. We are a successful specialist school gaining Training schools and Language College status. Our parent population has been kept on board and our reputation has grown.

We have a stronger more perceptive student voice across school. In summer 2007, our Ofsted judgement was outstanding.

Where next for your school?

• We will further overhaul years 7 to 9 and further blur the key stage boundaries
• We plan to create students who need less hot housing in key stage 4. This will require accelerated pathways for some, using new style SATS as markers. A full key stage 3 for some students will allow maximum achievement in the basics
• Subject content/skills will be analysed to remove redundant areas or rework with new skills. We will define and map these skills
• We plan a more cross-subject collaboration arising from our BSF One School Pathfinder status
• We will integrate current cross curricular days into subjects, eg work related learning into design technology
• We are making targeted development of our managed learning environment to extend learning pathways and the use of study time outside lessons. Subjects are collaborating in building MLE learning pathways. Teachers/adults other than teachers/older students will be involved learning guides, not as part of dumbing down lessons but rather making them more fluid with targeted inputs for different student groups
• We will build stronger links with feeder schools
• We will have to rethink what a good lesson is and continue to sell changes to all our stakeholders.
Monks’ Dyke Technology College
Chris Rolph, Headteacher

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

The main emphasis has been on the introduction of more applied courses into the curriculum, not just at my own school but also in seven schools across the local area (which has no nearby FE provision). A small number of post-16 and key stage 4 courses have been introduced from September 2007, but the main changes will take effect from September 2008. Schools have not had the resources necessary to provide the breadth of curriculum the students need and want, so we successfully bid to the LSC for £6 million capital funding which will be spent in 7 schools and also on a brand new purpose built building which will be run by a consortium, not a single institution (all due to be completed this summer). This has been complemented by £1.5 million capital funding to support the new Diplomas.

We have trialled some shared post-16 timetabling over the last two years, and will be increasing the number of shared courses from September 2008, with students and/or staff travelling between institutions.

How have you led those changes?

The complexity of seven-way partnerships developing a consortium approach to the curriculum has meant that we have had to develop new leadership structures to make changes. I formed and chair an education improvement partnership which identified the need and wrote the successful bid; this expanded beyond an original five schools to include FE providers, a university and business and work based learning representatives.

The seven building projects are managed centrally by a project management board which I also chair: this includes the LA and building contractors and ensures that the separate projects stay within budget and stick with the aims of the project rather than being shaped by the individual whims of the respective headteachers! We have formed a not for profit company which will have responsibility for the curriculum delivery in the new applied learning centre from September, and the management and employment of staff.

Where next for your school?

We need to develop key stage 3 to support the work at key stage 4. We have already introduced a ‘tools for learning’ course in years 7 to 9, and are looking at flexible starts to GCSE courses. We will move to vertical tutor groups in September 2008 and will be experimenting with vertical teaching groups.

We also need to restructure the senior team to support my role, which is now often out of school. Governance is being strengthened through trust status.
National Extension College
Tim Burton, Director of Educational Development

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

The National Extension College (NEC) draws from a pool of over 100 home based tutors connected to NEC through a custom built learning management system. Its school provision is based on approximately 20 GCSE and 20 AS/A2 distance learning courses.

Learners are remotely based; very few if any will ever visit NEC’s premises. They are allocated to subject based groups but need not be grouped in formal cohorts. NEC’s materials provide comprehensive, activity based learning tuned specifically to the targeted award specification. Tutorial support through written assignments is both formative and summative. Coursework assessments are carried out remotely, with telephone authentication. Negotiations are at an advanced stage with awarding bodies to enable remote management of the forthcoming GCSE controlled assessments.

Schools enrolling learners are encouraged to have a named staff contact (ideally per subject) and are provided with direct phone and email links to a member of NEC’s Cambridge-based support team.

Parents enrolling children are provided where possible with guidance on supporting them through their NEC course. We are trialling the use of subject-specific parent guides in eight GCSE subjects.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

Learners have welcomed innovations in technology. Parents are eager to take advantage of the enhanced guidance we provide. Schools see a partnership with NEC as a means of extending subject choice and increasing flexibility. Increased use of web based services has changed the relationship between development staff, support staff and students, leading to a more personalised service for those who require it and making feedback loops more effective. Both learner and tutor groups offer mutual support through web based discussion forums, creating defined areas of autonomous learning and development.

Where next for your college?

NEC plans to expand its use of electronic resources in the support of learning while maintaining a core of paper based material. Over the next year we will be experimenting with the use of a more diverse range of generic learning aids – eg utilising mobile technologies – with the aim of facilitating autonomous learning. For increasing numbers of NEC students, the web will provide a dashboard of learning opportunities, referenced to from the spine of a ‘learning journey’ constructed from the interplay of course materials, individual learner preferences and tutorial guidance.

It is worth noting that while appropriacy is vital, innovation is also a motivator in its own right. Continued innovation is a prerequisite for recruiting learners.
Newall Green High School
Neil Wilson, Headteacher

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

Following an audit of lost time due to lesson changeover we moved to double 50 minute slots called learning opportunities for all curriculum areas. We have been making minor changes during the last three years. We have calculated that we have created the equivalent of a full academic year over the five years of a student’s time in key stages 3 and 4. Standards continue to rise and we have been in the top 1% for CVA in each of the last three years.

Learning objectives and social emotional and learning skills (SEAL) have been developed alongside each other within normal curriculum time. The curriculum has not required a rewrite, and SEAL is not seen as bolt on.

We assess every half term with a differentiated grade. and the extended learning time and the development of SEAL has developed speaking and listening skills as part of peer assessment. Students now assess each other at least once a year per subject and this is recorded and reported to parents, moderated by teachers who have time within the curriculum time to talk with each student in their groups every lesson.

The use of learning mentors to support pastoral support as part of the extended school has been very successful (see SSAT publication Case Study Newall Green High School, www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk).

The development of an applied learning day as part of the key stage 4 curriculum, which includes college placements and sponsorship by the Royal Bank of Scotland for the BTEC in Business, has been very successful. The applied learning day has allowed personalised learning for all abilities.

How have you led those changes?

Distributed management has been crucial and the extension of the senior management team to include 13 assistant headteachers who double as pastoral and curriculum leaders has been important. Each is given a development brief as well as a maintenance responsibility. All initiatives are directed towards the standards agenda. The SEF and the process of review is very important and the culture of honest accountability without the development of a blame culture was highlighted by Ofsted (May 2007; outstanding).

Where next for your school?

Pulling together our three specialisms, applying the sixth form presumption, setting up a hard federation with a local primary school and marrying SEAL and the PLTS pilot.

The purchase of a college building will facilitate improvements, as too will the completion of a £17.2m build as part of BSF.

We are also further developing our extended school programme). In particular, an enhanced partnership with the local health authority will be very important in future development.

All of these together will positively impact on standards.
Ninestiles School
Christine Quinn, Headteacher

Ninestiles School have moved to 2.5-hour lessons across the board and then enabled pairs of subjects at key stage 3 to divide those sessions into 75-minute blocks where it is more suitable for learning in their area.

They operate a system of rolling breakfast (morning break) and lunch, designed to allow staff to decide when to stop work and take time out. As well as spreading the load on catering facilities, it creates extra flexibility for teachers in planning lessons.

Ninestiles School organise some subject areas combined together. For example 30% of the curriculum time for years 7 and 8 is based around competences, – English/humanities (= global Issues) and mathematics/science (= discovery). This approach will be extended into key stage 4 in coming years. Learners in years 7 and 8 have additional lessons for the subjects which we timetable together over the two year groups to allow for mixed age sets organised by level. This complements vertical (mixed age) tutor groups and pastoral support in years 7 to 10.

Our approach to PLTS is built using a homemade competency curriculum – modelled on problem based learning, as used in Californian schools.
How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

At key stage 3 students study the national curriculum subjects and are grouped in all subjects according to ability.

Some groups of students will receive extra literacy support before studying a modern foreign language. We are currently exploring plans to introduce language lessons for these groups. These lessons will focus on linguistic learning; combining the skills needed for language learning related to MFL and English language.

There is also a transition group that supports a small number of students through the change from primary school to secondary. This group, in year 7 has allowed us to work intensively to remove barriers for our most vulnerable students and ease transition. The students involved in the group settle very well and exhibit self confidence and positive attitudes to college as well as improvements in attendance from key stage 2. The timetable transfers during the last three weeks of the summer term. Year 6 join us for the last two weeks. This has had a positive impact across all key stages and allows for an extremely settled start in September.

Students face some significant issues that could become barriers to learning. These include weak literacy skills, low aspirations and confidence and often an inherited negative attitude towards learning. Innovative and creative ways have been used to make our curriculum more appealing to all groups of students. An individual curriculum has been organised for certain year 7 students and this new structure reflects different academic and social needs. The transition group, for example has allowed a group of vulnerable students to settle much more easily in the move from primary to secondary school and to ensure that academic progress is ongoing. We have identified weak reading skills as a major barrier to achievement and have addressed this through the creation of a ‘Reading Initiative’ room. We are piloting a reading programme aimed at underachieving able girls in key stage 4.

Focus days allow us to look at all aspects of learning in a creative and more appropriate way. The normal timetable is suspended for these days. We currently have 12 ‘focus days’ through out the year. The focus days are currently divided into six curriculum days and six pastoral days. Further developments are to include subject areas combining to deliver focus days and the implementation of the Opening Minds competences to underpin, initially, pastoral focus days.

Literacy objectives are set in all lessons and we are currently piloting a linked literacy programme in humanities and English. This year’s performance management literacy objective is for all staff to teach the necessary literacy skills that allow for students success in individual lessons. The new national curriculum will allow for closer links to be created across faculty areas not only in literacy but also in key concepts, and work has already begun in developing these. The teaching and learning group will begin to consider the Carol Dweck ‘mindset’ theories and how these can help to improve teaching and learning across the college. This will be action research in 2008 and will become part of our whole school vision for learning.

At Key stage 4 there is a wide range of opportunities for students to study subjects of their own choice. All students study a core mathematics, English, science, design technology, PE, RE and ICT. A curriculum choice is then offered based on the particular needs of the individual student. For example an able scientist may choose discrete GCSEs in physics, biology and chemistry. Whereas an applied science course may be more appropriate for others: some students may study more options, while others may need extra support in mathematics and English. The priority is to get every student to maximise his or her potential by studying appropriate accredited courses that are appropriate to him or her. At key stage 4 we have introduced a modular maths course to meet the learning needs of the middle-achieving students. Applied science has been successfully introduced into the science suite of courses at key stage 4 and the mathematics department will be offering GCSE statistics to the more able students.
Students can choose from a wide variety of GCSE subjects including history, geography, drama, art, PE business, music and German. They are also given the opportunity to study applied courses such as construction, engineering, ICT, DIDA, leisure and tourism, horticulture, applied art and hair and beauty.

All of our students study D&T at key stages 3 and key stage 4 to reflect our specialist college status and at key stage 4 all students follow an applied learning option. Opportunities for construction and engineering have been introduced in response to local market needs, and key stage 4 curriculum developments, in partnership with the local FE College we are developing student access to the Young Apprentice scheme. The specialised Diploma in construction will be delivered at Norham and rolled out to all secondary schools within the LA.

In order that we match learners’ needs, aspirations and capabilities we have introduced a wide range of curriculum choices in both key stages. Appropriate curriculum opportunities have been developed in year 10 and 11 e.g. construction, NW project, outdoor activities and XL activities. We have also introduced ASDAN accredited courses for a number of students. Our courses allow students to take the full range of GCSE’s or follow a limited, more varied curriculum according to pupil needs.

We aspire to meet the learning needs of all children through a personalised curriculum, while those children with the need for specific support are considered by the pupil referral panel, extended school provision and the pastoral structure. As a result of this work much alternative provision is offered, particularly at key stage 4 and has improved attendance and student achievement at 1+A*-G GCSEs.

There is good provision of curriculum enrichment activities take into account need and special interests/talents of students. Tuesday afternoon sessions include a wide range of accredited activities. Tuesday lesson 5 activities are accredited through Young Civic at key stage 3. We have introduced a personalised curriculum choice for year 10 linked to our raising standards agenda. Such subjects as media studies, statistics and ICT related activities are studied Tuesday lesson 5. Such activities have provided our students with experiences they would not otherwise have had. We have actively sought to increase pupil involvement in the life of the college in a number of ways.

**What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?**

The change in curriculum design over the last two years has led to the highest levels of achievement at 5*A-C: from 22% in 2002 to 39% and 36% in 2006 and 2007. Over 90% of students have achieved 5A*-G passes including English and Maths 2006 and 2007 and the 1A*-G was 98.8% in 2007.

Ensuring that each student has the appropriate curriculum has led to courses with a shared responsibility with the local FE college such as construction, identified students achieved a 100% success rate with BTEC level 2 awards, helping the overall achievement 5*A-C of boys to exceed the Jesson prediction.

Norham students are in the highest 9% nationally for SEN with a school deprivation factor of 0.5, the contextual value added however at Key stage 2 to Key stage 4 is 1017.6, placing the college in the 14th percentile nationally (latest data).

Early entry at the higher end of the ability range resulted in 61 students gaining GCSE media studies in year 10 (78% of the higher cohort) , while early entry for vulnerable students in year 10 led to 11 students achieving a GCSE pass in mathematics, English or both.

We have seen a significant shift in attitudes to learning from both staff and students and expect the long term impact to be very positive.
Outwood Grange College
Paul Sorby, Vice Principal – Deep Experience

Outwood Grange College are now moving into a new period of innovation in their curriculum design building on their move four years ago to a two year key stage 3 for all students. In this model GCSE courses started in year 9 but options didn’t start until year 10. During the school’s 3 year key stage 4 some students worked at Level 2 for all three years whilst just over a quarter started some Level 3 study in year 11. For some learners option time was used to boost performance in English and mathematics. These changes supported the raising of student engagement and achievement over that period.

They are moving to an arrangement where, as well as option courses being only one year long, students are potentially in mixed age classes for these courses. As they operate a three-year key stage 4, students in years 9, 10 and 11 might be working alongside each other. Included in this curriculum model are a variety of enrichment option courses which are non accredited, skills based programmes, designed to:

• Boost performance prior to level 2 accredited courses
• Bridge gaps between level 2 and level 3 courses
• Reduce the exam/coursework burden on students at any moment in time
• Engage students without the pressures of accreditation.

As with the previous model, for some learners’ option time is used to boost performance in English and mathematics.

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

• Two year key stage 3 for all students – GCSEs start in year 9 but with options still starting in year 10
• Three year key stage 4 – with some students working at level 2 for all three years and some students starting some level 3 study in year 11 (102/360 in current year 11)
• Some lecture style learning in key stage 5
• Introduction of year 7 world languages course
• Intense courses, eg BTEC Sport and OCR ICT
• Use of option time to Boost English/maths performance
• Introduction of BTEC Fire Fighters, delivered off site by community fire service.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

• GCSE 5+A*-C increased from 46% to 94% in last five years
• GCSE 5+A*-C (incl English & maths) increased from 34% to 62% in last five years
• KS2-4 CVA risen to 1022 (from a PANDA grade of E)
• Higher levels of student engagement arising from early success
• More challenge for more able students in key stage 4/year 11
• More support for vulnerable students in key stage 4
• More personalised learning for all students
• Improved key stage 5 performance over last five years
• High Performing Status achieved in Autumn 2007; applied learning second specialism.

Where next for your school?

• Develop a learning model for our students – what skills do we want our students to leave us with? How can we provide experiences to support this?
• Explore flexible learning days (as flexible Fridays at Leasowes School)
• Introduce options into year 9
• Option courses becoming one year in duration with options each year, vertical teaching
• Economies of scale in option courses – over 1000 students opting for courses each year
• Option process more flexible and responsive to student needs
• Options courses on two days in the week allowing efficient delivery of Diplomas and other applied learning experiences
• Truly flexible approach to 14–19 agenda
• Changes to blocking of time for subjects in key stages 4/5
• Introduction of extensive range of enrichment courses into options process
• Vertical mentor/tutor groups.
The Parkside Federation
Craig Morrison, Assistant Principal

Is a root problem in designing the curriculum the tension between subject knowledge leading later to credible accreditation and equipping learners to develop the competences needed to join the 21st century workforce? Yes, while accreditation is centralised and does not allow for co-constructed curricula. An assessed learning programme developed with students, using the range of competences, accredited by a credible body (not necessarily an exam board) would ease this tension.

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both the subjects and competencies?

We organise teachers into faculties where a common learning language can be developed across different subjects and where teachers often work in rotation to highlight the synergy between content and therefore foreground the importance of learning skills. Time is used flexibly: we regularly learn in interdisciplinary groups on project briefs that require students and staff to learn in a context beyond the comfort zone of subjects. Working with students from other age groups and schools makes further demands on young people’s competences.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

Institutional change has led to a change in our approach to the curriculum. Taking on a second secondary school firstly resulted in convergence of one sort: transferring structures and schemes of work. Now, in a second wave of activity, we are exploiting the special dynamic of having two schools, but one overall community. We are expecting more of young people in key areas as they take courses together aged 14–19: teamwork, negotiation, tolerance, planning and independence (in terms of travel in particular). This isn’t all mapped out, it doesn’t have to be, but it is a natural driver to recognise broader competences, along with the personalisation agenda.

It isn’t the only reason we want to develop wider skills/competences but it is a powerful one, which no one in the community can ignore. As curricula do not pay enough attention to competences, our reframing of courses through flexibility of timing, location and workforce helps us to challenge the assumptions that can come with qualifications: they do not have to be done in a set way.

Where next for your school?

This will only develop further as we bring primary schools into our federation and launch our first Diploma in September. We believe that the restructuring of curriculum through Diplomas will have a massive impact on the skills and competences agenda at key stage 3 and below.

We also want to develop further in-house forms of achievement, which are very common and successful at primary level. A new house system will be a powerful vehicle for celebrating achievement in a broad range of areas where traditional subjects do not necessarily – a creativity award at key stage 3 and a sports ‘blue’ are two in development.

We want to develop a sixth form presence with the International Baccalaureate because we feel this qualification presents the best balance between mastering subject knowledge and understanding learning and the whole person.

We want to develop our reporting system so that it adequately reflects the range of competences and skills, something employers and HE are keen to see.
Penryn College
Curriculum planning for 2007–8 and beyond
Context and background

A detailed curriculum consultation took place in March 2006, followed by intensive working groups on key stage 3–4 curriculum and the nature and delivery of personal development and guidance. Key attributes should be time and space for:

- Study, reflection, mentoring, individual tutoring time
- Fun, to be children and to care about each other
- Developing and practise key skills through specially designated days, department work, leadership activities and other means

Our short and medium term targets are outlined below against the changes made to the 2007/08 curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiration</th>
<th>Progress report</th>
<th>Further plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key stage 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the applied learning offer</td>
<td>Application for Diplomas not successful</td>
<td>2009: Considering BTEC in leisure &amp; tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researching BTEC in public services; BTEC in business either as part of further studies (June 07) or an additional option (Sept 08)</td>
<td>New Diploma application being made for creative &amp; media, engineering &amp; ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post 16: considering delivery of PE &amp; sport in partnership with Falmouth School (Sept 08)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure the start of key stage 4 remains a fresh start for everyone but take account of what we have learnt about each student’s pattern of learning, skills, aptitudes, interests and family circumstances and use that information to shape the curriculum and support we provide him/her</td>
<td>Year 10 students select 3 (rather than 4) options</td>
<td>Evaluate course through attainment in assessment points and individual reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 9 (06–07) student progress analysed: 16 year 10 students identified who now follow Study Plus, a secondary strategy course concentrating on reinforcement of literacy and numeracy skills through other GCSE subjects.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identified year 11 &amp; year 10 underachieving girls; substitute an option for additional focused support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide staging posts by setting short term challenging targets in lessons and entry to exams before end of year 11</td>
<td>Revised science GCSE syllabus allows GCSE success at end of year 10.</td>
<td>Year 11 students selected, according to aptitude and attitude, for pathways (June year 1 onwards) see below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected year 10 students take statistics.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 08 GCSEs all yr 10 students take: – ICT accreditation – RE GCSE short course (RE then delivered through specialist days; being planned with RE adviser)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continued...</td>
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</table>
### Key stage 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiration</th>
<th>Progress report</th>
<th>Further plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This frees up to four lessons available from June year 1 to enable delivery of pathways</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reshape the curriculum and support we provide each student following each assessment and progress review</td>
<td>All students designated a mentor. Individual progress to be reviewed at each assessment point &amp; programme adjusted if needed.</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide individual/group support for identified students when they need it</td>
<td>Three teacher mentors appointed to support individuals and groups</td>
<td>Monitor progress and success through comment and data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide time for study in curriculum time for some students</td>
<td>Year 10 have personal, learning and applied learning skills, which allocates time to support structured coursework completion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach and accredit study and organisation skills throughout all year groups</td>
<td>All year 10 are working towards Certificate of Personal Effectiveness level 2</td>
<td>Consider offering Certificate of Personal Effectiveness level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree and organise each subject’s requirements so that each student’s work demands are reasonable and achievable</td>
<td>Departments have planned a coursework calendar to avoid multiple and conflicting requirements from a range of subjects. Its delivery is reinforced through the personal development programme</td>
<td>Evaluate &amp; replan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiration</th>
<th>Progress report</th>
<th>Further plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restructure the key stage 3 curriculum so: – students are supported /challenged as required – needless repetition becomes useful reinforcement – experiences are enhanced through gained time</td>
<td>Depts are rewriting schemes of work in line with newly published guidelines. Implementation year 7 in Sept 08.</td>
<td>Review of structure of intervention programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetable a morning or afternoon of humanities in year 7 to allow inter-disciplinary work across the different subjects</td>
<td>History &amp; RE groups are common at key stage 3 &amp; depts are teaching both subjects to an agreed structure, which reinforces learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a more refined and widely used key skills programme in year 7 onwards</td>
<td>QCA Personal, Learning &amp; Thinking Skills framework to assess skills throughout year 7 in subject cross age projects &amp; outdoor education visits</td>
<td>Review tutor time in the curriculum to aid this process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aspiration | Progress report | Further plans
--- | --- | ---
Timetable a morning or afternoon of creative arts in year 7 to allow inter-disciplinary work across the different subjects | To be planned

**Timetable structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Possible models being devised</th>
<th>Audit of study support being completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A flexible timetable framework with varying starts and/or ends of day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned use of out of hours time to deliver and enhance curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning blocks of varying lengths which suit learning needs within each subject</td>
<td>Audit being completed. Different models proposed; preferred options subject to further discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Staggered lunchtimes | | Timetable models being considered

**Effective use of post SATS time:**

*Restructure the curriculum for year 9 after SAT exams using some of:*

- Celebration of what has been achieved so far and an induction to key stage 4
- 3–5 ICT days
- Intensive language days for those who have opted for MFL, those who would like to experience a language they haven’t had time to learn or supplement what they know already. Could this allow a visit abroad for some? All?
- Creative arts shared curriculum projects
- Leadership in Action days: which ones?
- Independent learning programme (possibly accredited by CoPE) which culminates in a practical application & assessment of skills learnt
- Mentoring
- Applied core course – work sampling in small groups
- Aim Higher activities
- Intervention programme – literacy & numeracy in a number of innovative ways
- Technology days
- G&T activity
- Start an option
- Can we reduce disruption in the rest of the year by putting those activities in this time?
- What subjects should students continue to study after SATs? What would the timetable look like for everyone?
### Key stage 4: The pathways programme (2–3 periods)

All students choose three options and two prioritised reserves. For the remaining three periods, the school directs students to one of the three routes (from June year 1), which will help them best reach their destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route 1</th>
<th>Route 2</th>
<th>Route 3</th>
<th>Route 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced studies</td>
<td>Additional studies</td>
<td>Supporting studies</td>
<td>Flexibility programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For students with high attendance, working to full potential, with capacity for further challenge</td>
<td>For students with high attendance, working full potential</td>
<td>For students who need skills &amp; time to complete GCSEs</td>
<td>For students who will benefit from specifically directed provision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A selection from:
  - GCSE courses
  - a range of accredited & unaccredited courses to deepen and widen knowledge & experience.
  - extended project (which will be part of Diploma)
  - specific work to gain top grades

- Mentor to advise on organisational skills

- English, mathematics, science, RE, PE work experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation for A-Level or AS Level level 3 Certificate in Personal Effectiveness</th>
<th>Level 2 Certificate in Personal Effectiveness</th>
<th>Extra literacy/numeracy help if needed</th>
<th>College course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice in high level independent learning skills</td>
<td>Time and help to complete coursework &amp; revision requirements</td>
<td>Time and help to complete coursework &amp; revision requirements</td>
<td>Outdoor ed/problem solving/team building leading to Asdan award</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DIDA SUITE:** All students are given the opportunity to gain 1, 2 or 4 GCSEs. Time allocation: non double linguists have time in year 9 ICT (2 periods), 3, 4 or 5 ICT PSAT days, 1 period year 10 and a number of twilight sessions. An ICT option (3 periods) will continue to be available. Once a student has achieved their GCSE, they will then have study time available.
To view the curriculum as a single entity does not reflect the complexity of schools adequately. If you view the curriculum as the tip of an iceberg then 8/9ths sits below the surface and keeps the top visible above the water. What we do below the surface – the structures, processes, systems and most importantly the changes that we make allow the curriculum to be developed. Change in the curriculum will not be successful if that change is not complementary. I believe a successful curriculum embraces a change culture below the surface and for me the key element is a willingness to try and fail with a ‘make new failures not repeat old ones’ philosophy. Equally, change is not instantaneous and we must recognise the timelines required for those key aspects that will embed curriculum innovation and development in our schools – mentoring, pastoral systems, professional development and ICT infrastructure.

In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

- Vertical pastoral system
- Mentoring for all students, timetabled for all staff working alongside support staff
- Changed school day to four lessons in the morning and one in the afternoon with biometric registration
- Year 7 competency curriculum delivered by fewer staff (eg, one humanities teacher delivers history, geography and RE)
- Pilot projects – Opening Minds, two-year key stage 3, functional skills, L2L
- Two week year 7 induction programme with super learning days
- Pathways for key stage 4 – early entry for least and most able
- TLR structure that embraces the ‘blank sheet of paper’ approach
- Competences for teachers that feeds into performance management
- Learning hubs that drive strategic planning
- Increased number of TA 3s to allow greater classroom involvement
- Online parental access to reports and mentoring – real time information
- Learning federation collaboration to produce a shared applied learning centre
- Flexible curriculum in key stage 4 that allows for individualised pathways beyond the school base – apprenticeships, football scholarships, extended work placements, etc.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

The creation of a flexible approach to the timetable and learning means that staff no longer see only one route for students with a prescribed fixed allocation. Students can take GCSEs over different time periods, courses in key stage 3 are changing with fewer teachers, content is becoming less of a driver and how children learn is becoming more of a focus. Students are more willing to question and less willing to accept being empty vessels to be filled.

Where next for your school?

Change has been a constant for five or more years. Some elements need consolidation but others will move to the next level. Key stage 4 has had a lot of time devoted to it and needs a period of consolidation before the new specifications. Our focus in key stage 3 is about providing enrichment of educational experience, and a more engaging curriculum that bridges the movement between Key stage 2 and 3 and Key stage 3 and 4. In doing this, year 9 will become a focus, and the way in which we develop this is our real challenge. The analogy being used is that of a racetrack with different starting points and different finishing points. Some pupils in year 9 may have a 3-year KS4, others a 3-year KS3, and others somewhere between the two.

A real curriculum challenge.
Redbridge Community School  
Richard Schofield, Headteacher

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

Introduction of key stage 4 curriculum pathways

Partnerships with other providers eg, local colleges, private training organisations have led to a wider range of applied and personal development courses. Bespoke pathways have been created as a result of greater curriculum and timetabling flexibility i.e. some students now spend up to 33% of their week following one specific line of learning.

More applied learning courses

Our learners generally prefer a modular approach and perform better when not faced with one off, end-of-course exams. They respond positively to contextualised learning opportunities.

We now offer as many applied courses as traditional GCSE courses. With effect from September 2008 all year 10 students will follow an applied course spanning the whole of a Thursday. This arrangement will provide a platform for future Diploma collaboration with neighbouring schools and colleges.

Year 7 transition curriculum

We are now into our fifth year of running a transition curriculum based on the RSA Opening Minds model for all year 7 students. Almost a third of their week is devoted to a thematic approach to learning aimed at developing skills and competences (tools for learning).

Adopting a routeways approach to PE

Programmes have been developed to take account of preferred learning styles. As a consequence, participation and success rates have increased considerably.

More use of adults other than teachers

The learning experience at key stage 4, in particular, has been enriched by the introduction of AOTs in areas such as art, music and PE. For example, our music technician (a budding rock star!) adds enormous value to our BTEC programme through his knowledge of music technology and his experience of the music industry.

How have you led those changes?

In all cases the ground has been thoroughly prepared before change has been introduced. Small working groups have taken examples of leading edge practice and thinking from around the country and adapted programmes to suit our own needs. Our staff have continually kept up to date with wider developments and have been actively supported when taking risks within a culture of no blame.

Where next for your school?

- The development of flexible Fridays, designed to develop cross curricular learning projects
- The development of a major/minor programme of electives in years 8 and 9
- The introduction of Diplomas
- The development of our own sixth form
- The further development of the key stage 3 curriculum to embrace many features of the key stage 4 programme
- The development of flexible ‘windows for learning’ during the day.
In what ways have you changed how you deploy people, organise learners into groups, divide time and use different locations?

• Increased flexibility programmes for KS4 students for the past four years – students travelling to learn at FE colleges, especially Plumpton Agricultural College

• For students Key stage 4 increasing use of work placements each week

• QA became a big time drain for senior leadership team/middle leaders visiting work placements/Increased Flexibility (IF) placements we appointed a flexible work/learning coordinator – a non teacher who placed students across county and came with large database of contacts. They tracks students: quality-assure placements and ensure student progression

• Lewes Rural 14–19 Consortium formed September 2006 -with Ringmer’s principal as the Chair. Ringmer is the lead applied learning specialist school in Lewes area and is building a new post-16 centre under sixth form presumption

• Consortium breaks down old rivalries and some of the competition - now have common timetabling: travel plans; four Diploma lines levels 1–3 across consortium from September 2008; deputies group work together; specialist teachers’ groups work together jointly planning the delivery of Diploma lines; redesign and new pathways for personalised learning 14–19 across a wide area. Targeting NEET reduction. (Consortium consists of Sussex Downs FE College; Plumpton Agricultural College; three secondary schools; PRU; CSA; LSC; Connexions; EBP)

• At Ringmer – we are designing new 14–19 progression for college by stage not age – accelerate gifted and talented to have some sessions in sixth form, taking exams early; others to stay on for level 1–2 work

• New ways of mentoring – academic tracking across college – groups of 18 – using all staff, including non-teaching. Vertical houses led by non-teachers.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

• Increased CVA key stage 4. APS per student in top 13% this year

• Increased CVA boys attainment over past four years, from 23% median and above to 44%

• Behaviour and attitudes, a concern in 2004, now good and a strength

• Tracking secure and in place

• One third of students want to stay on in sixth form

• Better collaborative working relationships and CPD opportunities for staff

• Real impact in terms of achievement and progress has still to embed

• Staff/student relationships excellent

• Parental and governor involvement much more proactive and positive.

Where next for your school?

• Radical rethink of key stage 3

• Embed Diplomas and create a sixth form.
Saffron Walden County High School (SWCHS)

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

- Two-year key stage 3 introduced in September 2003 as part of the first cohort of the national pilot
- SWCHS was already instigating various personalisation issues around acceleration
- Able historians starting AS history rather than GCSE. Able art students taking AS in year 11 rather than GCSE
- Decision taken in spring 2004 that all students should start key stage 4 in year 9 (following condensed key stage 3), including going through an options process
- September 2005: students begin key stage 4 courses in year 9
- Summer 2007: approximately one third of cohort takes at least two GCSEs in year 10; 10% of cohort takes four GCSEs. Results are very encouraging, at least comparable with equivalent year 11s
- September 2007: students having taken early GCSEs have a range of options: additional GCSEs; AS levels; bridging GCSE/advanced level courses; enrichment courses
- Less able mathematics students take their GCSE in summer 2007
- OU modules introduced in year 13 in biology and history.

How have you led those changes?

- Three staff have been key: headteacher (overall strategic direction); deputy headteacher curriculum (operational leadership and partnering headteacher in determining overall strategy); timetabler (creating a blocking structure which fits together key stages 4 and 5 projected three years ahead)
- Strategy and operational details regularly debated at senior leadership team (SLT) and middle leadership group meetings
- All SLT members had direct involvement in operational details at an early stage by being part of the parent/student advice team
- At least one full staff meeting per year devoted to the changes
- Headteacher regularly, informally samples staff opinion at all levels
- Prior to the decision to begin key stage 4 in year 9, full debate at governing body – chair of governors knowledgeable and involved in fine detail of the initiative
- Regular reports to governors’ education committee and always a paragraph in headteacher’s termly report to governors
- Parental forum meets termly to discuss the initiative, with particular objective of allowing parental concerns to be aired. Also, annual parents’ meeting retained
- Headteacher and deputy write detailed letters on an ongoing basis to parents with particular concerns (and hold face to face meetings where necessary)
- SWCHS holds regular visits/seminars organised through the Cambridge Consortium
- SWCHS coordinates the formation of a regional working group of schools embarked on similar curricular development work.

Where next for your school?

- Greater coordination in determining individual personalised pathways through key stage 4 – especially balance between two and three year subjects
- Strengthening of enrichment opportunities within three-year GCSEs
- Significant extension of applied learning offer at key stage 4
- Implication of the introduction of A* grade at A-level carefully considered
- Consideration given over whether all students should take SATs in year 8
- Progressive learning to learn programme introduced from September 2007 onwards
- Consortium bid to introduce Diplomas in September 2009 submit.

See page 30 for further information about the requirements for early entry to end of key stage 3 tests.
St John’s School and Community College, Marlborough
Kathy Pollard, Director of Curriculum Innovation

How does your school design the curriculum to give access to both to subjects and competences?

Induction sets the tone for our expectations of student attitude and performance. The year 7 curriculum is theme based, each theme encompassing all subjects of the national curriculum and some others. There is an overriding focus on developing key skills and learning competences to form a cohesive learning experience. In year 8, there is still a theme based approach as students develop more advanced subject knowledge and skills. Every lesson is expected to highlight the skill development giving it a ‘recognised personal value’. The curriculum content is delivered through the development of skills. Years 9 to 13 continue this emphasis, with subjects delivering the skills but looking like many other curriculum models with a range of pathways and students taking early entry when appropriate.

A focus on mentoring supports the high level of challenge and the personalised aspect of students’ learning.

We have introduced the International Baccalaureate as this supports and builds on our curriculum more effectively than AS and A2 courses. The value we place upon the development and nurturing of individual competence now underpins the whole curriculum.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

- Ofsted judged our curriculum as outstanding (2005 and Feb 2007)
- Improved engagement of students and subsequently improved behaviour
- Excellent development of students’ personal skills and competences
- A strong impact on boys’ performance
- High levels of self confidence and enjoyment
- Improved attendance (and lower numbers in the medical room)
- Reduction in bullying and need for counselling in lower school
- Confident and competent learners with higher expectations of themselves and of their teachers
- Improved relationships between students and teachers
- Improved key stage 3 results, GCSE results, AS and A2 results
- Teacher development in cross curricular teams, sharing good practice
- Our staff have developed effective mentoring skills.

Where next for your school?

- We are already looking at the IB Middle Years programme and questioning whether GCSEs are an impediment to progress
- Diplomas start in Sept 2008. The IB Diploma enters its second year
- Continued evolution of the year 7 and 8 curriculum, rewriting with new themes. A stronger focus with a dedicated team of enthusiastic volunteers who will have a higher proportion of their time with years 7 and 8. This will help deal with the issues arising from a new build and our move onto a single site
- Continuing development of the collegiate management structure to underpin the curriculum and its impact on every student
- We are looking at vertical tutor groups and how they would run alongside mixed ability teaching groups to provide additional peer support on transition
- Establishing a federation with other schools in the North Wiltshire area
- Challenging every aspect of school life in preparation for a single site and new building
- On an international level we are working with the RSA and EU to explore how the RSA Opening Minds curriculum can be introduced into the national curriculum of seven European countries with interest from America as well.
St Peter’s Collegiate C of E School
David Cooke, Assistant Principal

The curriculum at St Peter’s is essentially a traditional structure, and recognised by Ofsted as outstanding. The local dimension to our curriculum in terms of collaboration is hugely significant. In recent years we have embarked on post-16 and increasingly 14–19 cross-city collaboration, with a view to establishing a wide ranging curriculum offer to students. These structures have involved the alignment of curriculum blocks across the city and two-day option blocks at key stage 4 for all schools.

We moved to a six period day to facilitate this three years ago. This involves longer learning blocks (doubles, triples) for all subjects. All core subjects at key stage 3 teach a combination of doubles and singles, with singles for foundation subjects.

We see highly qualified subject staff based in departments as the best means to develop subject knowledge, leading to strong outcomes at all key stages. We have decided not to merge/link subjects together.

The long learning blocks have acted as a catalyst to complete change in the approach to teaching and learning, including open-ended investigations, coaching and mentoring and independent study involving a VLE. We are currently actively planning for a more assertive mentoring system built into a vertical tutoring framework. The coaching team has spearheaded much of this development and this reduced subject boundary barriers and enabled staff to focus on enhanced teaching and learning skills. The coaching team has doubled in size over the last year and will increase year on year to involve all staff ultimately.

Thinking skills are now used in all lessons. AfL techniques are widely used by staff and students.

We have a number of off-timetable days for separate year groups, in a range of settings. We are introducing a learning week in the summer term.

Lesson observations have shown an increase in the number of lessons judged to have outstanding features. Early indications show that the current year 10 are projected to have and A*-C figure in line with top 25 percentile FFT with an increase in key stage 2 to 4 CVA figure.

The next steps involve a continuation in the changes in approach to learning and teaching, lesson planning and cross curricular planning, with an increase in the size of the coaching team. The timetable structure will evolve further in phase with BSF, which will enable greater flexibility in learning spaces. We will introduce off-timetable days for the whole school for deep learning experience, off-timetable days for the whole school for deep learning experiences and for developing competences through a planned and coordinated approach in meaningful and relevant situations. We have revised our target setting days to include an aspect of this to be built on in future years. The aim is to make knowledge relevant by teaching it through competences, therefore achieving a balance, relevant and coherent approach between subjects, personal development and skills.

From September 2008 we will have a five year staff Inset plan involving development in all the key competences: for example, interactive whiteboard use, podcasting, VLE and flash animation leading to internal accreditation. We believe our answer to avoid the tension is not to have a big bang quick solution, but to institute step by step changes, year on year involving all stakeholders in the co-construction of the new curriculum.
Thomas Deacon Academy
Richard Valler, College Leader

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

The first principle in designing our original curriculum was to maximise choice at key stage 4. We have recently undertaken a review in which we focused on six key questions:

• What are our learners like now?
• What do we want our learners to be like?
• What are the strengths of our current curriculum?
• What features do we need to have in our new curriculum?
• How do we evaluate the impact of our new curriculum?
• What do we need to do to bring about the change to our curriculum?

This process clearly identified a need to address literacy deficiencies to give pupils greater access to the curriculum.

Outcomes:

• Added an extra English lesson in key stage 4
• All pupils will be competent in ICT so removed ICT as a timetabled lesson in the core curriculum at key stage 4. Pupils can still choose ICT as one of their four option subjects if they are recommended to do so
• We have three pathways: GCSE, a hybrid of GCSE and applied courses and predominantly applied courses with the core subjects
• Compulsory RE GCSE in which elements of PHSE and citizenship were included
• Specialism gives more choice in options such as electronics and astronomy.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

• In one predecessor schools dramatically improved the chances of pupils progressing on to appropriate courses at key stage 5
• Introduction of IBD
• Higher percentage of level 2 passes
• Early entry – positive for many students gaining very high grades. Downside, poorly planned year 11 experience for many.

Where next for your school?

We have an ongoing debate about the shape of the curriculum. Providing breadth and relevance for students, particularly at the extremes of the ability bands, is a key issue. Do we encourage students to study subjects even if they are unlikely to gain a level 2 qualification? We have introduced L2L for all year 7 and each curriculum area is developing thematic curriculum, which will eventually be delivered in cross curricular modules, initially piloted through collapsed days. We are developing the use of e-learning on our VLE and targeting pupils for top grades.
Tonbridge Grammar School  
Mercedes Hernández Estrada, Deputy Headteacher

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

We have used Guy Claxton’s work on deep learning as the basis for the four skills we want all students and staff to be aware of. These have been shared with staff and incorporated into our schemes of work. Students have also been given the four categories and in years 7 and 12 the Asdan portfolio gathers evidence of each.

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

The enquiry based learning (EBL) weeks for year 7 have been evaluated amongst staff, students and parents. The feedback has overwhelmingly been that students are gaining in confidence and transition is far easier.

The take up of Asdan is higher than expected: all 150 year 7 students taking Silver and 90 year 12 doing the Platinum Award.

Where next for your school?

• Continue with EBL weeks in year 7 and expand to year 8
• Create a skills based year 9 sandwiched between a two-year key stage 3 and key stage 4. This is an exciting and flexible model, which has allowed subject leaders to plan for a year prior to students taking options and follow the IB Middle Years programme to create a holistic model for delivery.

See section 3.1 for further information about the requirements for early entry to end of key stage 3 tests
Tudor Grange School
Claire Maclean, Deputy Headteacher

Tudor Grange School offer a Learning to Learn programme delivered by tutors in a vertical tutor group system, much which is delivered by projects supported by online materials. Further, the year 7 curriculum is driven by online projects based on the DIDA model. In the future their curriculum to be much better supported by out of the classroom learning experiences. They are exploring the idea of a service award their students will need to achieve, inspired by the CAS (creativity, action, service) programme at the centre of the IB diploma programme.

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

- Two year key stage 3
- Learning to learn programme delivered by tutors in a vertical tutor group system, much of the programme is delivered by projects supported by online materials
- Year 7 curriculum driven by online projects based on the DIDA model

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

- Time created in year 11 for pupils to pursue non-accredited study
- Teaching driven by skills objectives rather than content
- There is a real and ongoing dialogue emerging about learning and competences between all staff
- We have begun to see commonality between subjects and make the curriculum more holistic for the pupils.

Where next for your school?

We are currently engaged in discussion regarding the changes we would like to make in light of the new secondary curriculum. We are writing a curriculum for year 7 and 8, where the subjects depicted in the draft diagram below are grouped to deliver a common curriculum. It is hoped that the curriculum would be much better supported by out of the classroom learning experiences. We are thinking along the lines of a service award the pupils will need to achieve, which has been inspired by the CAS programme at the centre of the IB Diploma programme.

Proposed curriculum for year 7 and 8 using blocked timetable chunks

1 See page 30 for further information about the requirements for early entry to end of key stage 3 tests.
What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

The last five years have seen significant changes to our curriculum. Since 2003 we have introduced 100-minute lessons for every subject across the whole school. Every student now has a three period day every day across a two-week timetable. By changing the default setting for lesson length we have: raised the quality of lesson planning; made time for deeper learning based around assessment for learning and student voice and we have improved the quality of relationships in the school to the point where staff and students describe relationships as the best feature of the school.

In addition we have had a 10% rule over curriculum time (no subject gets more than 10% of total available time), which has increased the time for humanities and the arts in key stage 3. We have guaranteed four free options for all students in key stage 4, as well as offering all a technology option, and we have restructured tutoring, improving the ratio of staff to students to further personalise support for learners.

How have you led these changes?

Our own, school based futures vision group was vital to prepare the ground and generate the ideas for change from the staff rather than from the leadership. Continuous discussion with staff ensured that new ideas became familiar and less threatening. Listening to student wishes provided a powerful motivator for change. These actions reduced resistance.

The 100-minute lessons were piloted in one year group and evaluated by staff and students and lessons learned. These evaluations informed the use of the generous professional development time given before the plans were implemented across the school. Professional development time has also been ongoing, a research group has kept staff focused on best practice and department meetings now have a developmental focus. As a result teacher anxiety has reduced.

We have continued to evaluate the initiative with staff and students and have also remained in open dialogue about 100-minute lessons via the staff survey. Curriculum leaders have agreed minimum standards for lesson delivery and these are the basis for ongoing monitoring of standards. In addition leaders in the school continue to describe the vision. We have tried to support departments’ resource needs, especially with regards to ICT and have been careful with our recruitment.

Where next for our school?

The curriculum review has encouraged us to go further in personalising learning.

Next year we will

- Introduce an additional period 4 for gifted and talented learners
- Develop further our primary model to support successful transition
- Encourage inter-departmental projects.

Finally we wish to embrace a much wider range of learning opportunities, so we will re-timetable one afternoon a fortnight to do so.
Waingels College
Richard Green, Executive Principal

Waingels College have restructured the way that the key stages are organised, alongside a move to vertical learning communities that replace horizontal year groups and the development and implementation of a personal development curriculum delivered by adult learning coaches and student mentors.

One element was the introduction of a project and competence based foundation curriculum based on the RSA Opening Minds framework. This began with a pilot of 30 very able students in order to demonstrate the impact of innovation to the parent body, then to all year 7. It now extends into years 8 and 9.

The school have begun grouping students by stage not age to allow, especially, for acceleration of the most able through the curriculum (key stage 3 SATs in year 8; GCSE in year 9 and year 10 to IB Diploma in year 11). This complements the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Diploma into key stage 5 and the IB Middle Years Programme into key stage 4.

What have been the major changes in your curriculum in recent years?

• Introduction of a project and competence based foundation curriculum based on RSA Opening Minds framework
• Introduction of International Baccalaureate Diploma into key stage 5 and now Middle Years Programme into key stage 4
• Grouping of students by stage not age
• Development of curriculum routes to enable greater personalisation of the offer
• Establishment of vertical learning communities to replace horizontal year groups and the implementation of a personal development curriculum delivered by adult learning coaches and student mentors.

How have you led those changes?

• Establishment of semi-autonomous curriculum teams to develop and lead the curriculum
• Development of student involvement in the development, monitoring, review, evaluation and review of the curriculum and its delivery
• Piloting all major developments with target groups of students/staff followed by careful evaluation and review before roll-out to whole cohorts.

Where next for your school?

BSF One School Pathfinder project (due for completion by 2010) to establish three ‘schools-within-schools’ of 500 students each, with pairs of curriculum teams and pairs of vertical learning communities.

See page 30 for further information about the requirements for early entry to end of key stage 3 tests.
West Exe Technology College
Vicki Carah, Assistant Headteacher

How does your school design the curriculum to give access both to subjects and competences?

West Exe Technology College after much discussion about the potential for perceived conflict between developing subject knowledge and securing progress in PLTS have safeguarded the core subjects of English, maths, science and technology in the curriculum planning. Lesson time for these subjects will remain the same with an expectation that cross curricular dimensions, PLTS etc will be made explicit to students where these occur and that students will be able to choose to be assessed in these areas during those lessons.

All other subjects will give up curriculum time to contribute to a skills/competences based cross curricular package called i-Learn lasting one day a week in each of years 7, 8 and 9. This will take place on a rolling basis to ensure students do experience each subject discretely at some point during key stage 3 as it is felt that a complete loss of subject identity might have a detrimental effect on option numbers at key stage 4. The cross curricular themes, PLTS etc included in all subjects are to be mapped centrally so that i-Learn teachers are aware of the departments where students will receive reinforcement of their coverage of them.

The West Exe i-Learn team comprises subject specialists from the foundation subject areas donating time to i-Learn in a particular year group. This is led by humanities subjects in year 7 with support from Languages, ICT, technology and PE.

In year 8 the expressive arts subjects and a range of non-core subjects will combine to allow learners to focus on applied learning areas not traditionally experienced by their students at key stage 3 and in year 9 (reflecting applied learning second specialism).

What has been the impact of the changes you’ve made in recent years?

The changes noted above are to start in September 2008. They are intended to bring our key stage 3 curriculum in line with our key stage 4. This offers a wide range of applied and academic courses and assumes a level of PLTS development which our students currently do not have. These courses have engaged our key stage 4 students, leading to an increase in attendance and improvement in behaviour – but we do need to lay the foundations at key stage 3 to maximise their success.

Where next for your school?

- We are looking at the PASS system (Pupil Attitudes To Self & School) as a mechanism for assessing skills and further personalisation
- As we roll the i-Learn curriculum out, we will need to evaluate and monitor to tailor the input for particular groups of students.
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