

23 July 2009

Ref: IR/LL

The Qualifications & Curriculum Authority
83 Piccadilly
London
W1J 8QA

Dear Sir

BCS Response to the QCA's Public Consultation on Curriculum Reform

Members of the BCS (British Computer Society), including those on its Education and Training Forum and Expert Panel, have studied Sir Jim Rose's recommendations for changes to the Primary Curriculum and associated documents released by QCA. BCS is pleased to submit its online response to QCA on these recommendations.

BCS welcomes the proposed changes, and believes that the proposed structuring of the curriculum with a core of essentials for life and learning and six broad areas of learning will provide a good foundation for education and allow children and teachers to make connections between interrelated subjects. The proposed curriculum would appear to be one which has the potential, given the right pedagogic approach, to "instil a love of learning for its own sake". Increased opportunities for independent learning, including learning through play, provide some opportunities for tailoring the curriculum to each child's enthusiasms and aspirations, as well as their abilities, although the recommendations might have paid closer attention to personalisation of the curriculum.

We are pleased to see information and communication technology (ICT) take its place as one of the essentials for learning and life, as confident, independent use of IT is now essential for children's effective learning across the curriculum and in preparation for adult life.

The integration of ICT within the programmes of learning in the six areas is also welcomed, and we are pleased to note the extensive indications given for the use of ICT within the six statutory areas of learning, particularly in relation to the arts. Our attached response makes a number of suggestions for additional ways in which ICT may be studied within the six areas of learning, further extending or enriching learning in these areas.

This integration will, however, necessitate significant professional development for many primary school teachers, and the role of the primary school ICT coordinator is likely to need further development in many schools, where these individuals may need to take on responsibility for coordinating such training, as well as perhaps acting as e-champions. The delivery of ICT across the curriculum must be carefully monitored to ensure all pupils benefit from the proposed changes.

We are pleased that some attention has been paid to ICT-specific subject content (such as programming), particularly within the scientific and technological and mathematical areas of learning. These areas might, however, be extended further in recognition of the importance of an understanding of the principles and practices of computing, such as logical thinking and a rigorous, structured approach to creative problem solving. We were pleased to see that the importance of e-safety is recognised, and would suggest that ethical, legal and environmental aspects of ICT might also merit inclusion.

We also welcome the revision of the ICT subject level descriptions; these appear to provide more 'challenge' overall. We were surprised that explicit reference to pupils becoming independent, confident users of ICT at level 4 or 5 had not been made, and that criteria for 'exceptional performance' had received only minor revision. Some members felt that greater recognition should be given to pupils' use of communication and collaboration tools and techniques. Teachers might find it helpful for the proposed level descriptions to match more closely the wording of the ICT elements within the programmes of learning.

BCS is very pleased to have had the opportunity to respond to these proposals. We would be happy to provide a more detailed contribution to the ICT elements within the programmes of learning if that would be useful.

Yours sincerely



Ian Ryder
Deputy Chief Executive, The British Computer Society
Tel: +44 (0)1793 417750