

**Teaching Commission 2026 – revised
National Curriculum.
How to ensure effective
implementation from a school's
perspective.**

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Effective implementation

.....changing the established habits and behaviours of educators through implementation isn't straightforward. On the one hand, schools need to develop a practical infrastructure that supports implementation, such as sufficient time and resources; on the other, implementation is fundamentally a social process, and getting the interactions right between people across the school is essential.

Effective implementation

This guidance helps schools embrace the complex and social nature of change.

It shows that when people work together effectively, they can achieve something that is greater than the sum of their individual efforts.

Ultimately, however well-evidenced an educational idea or intervention is, what really matters is how it manifests itself in the day to day work of people in schools.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS



What is being implemented

Consider whether the approach is:

- evidence-informed
- right for the setting
- feasible to implement



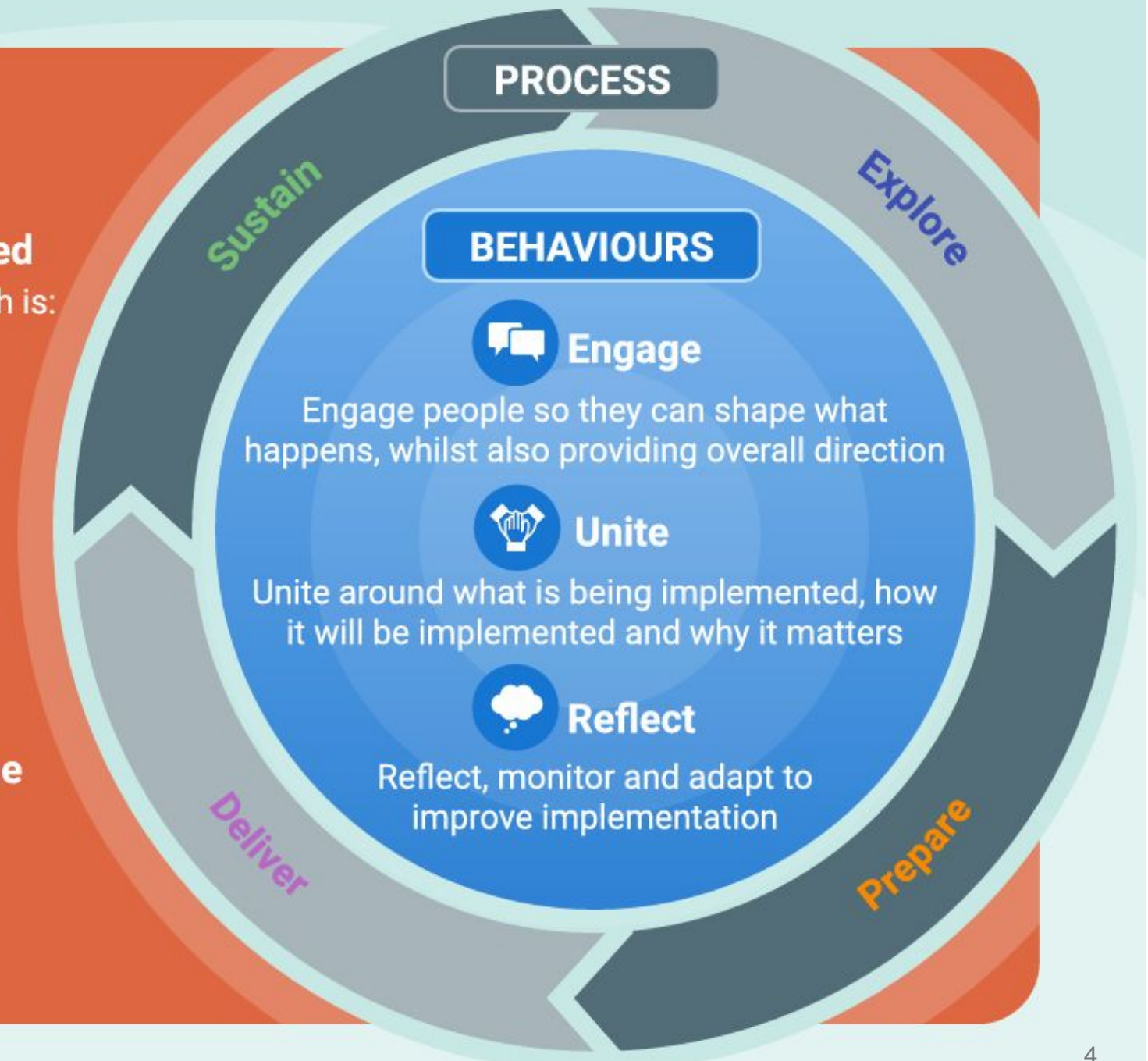
Systems and structures

Develop an infrastructure that supports implementation e.g. time, roles, logistics



People who enable change

Ensure people are in place across the school who can support, lead and positively influence implementation



Evidence gathering

- Personal experiences:
 - Teacher & School, MAT & systems leader
 - All phases & range of schools including large MATs serving wide scale disadvantage
 - Led Teacher and leadership development at every level
 - Curriculum design
- Discussions with:
 - School leaders
 - Teachers
 - Subject leaders
 - Curriculum designers

Initial reaction to the recommendations

- Limited exposure to the recommendations so far
- Overall agreement with the vision and recommendations
- Schools with high levels of disadvantage are fulfilling much of the change already due to necessity
- Awareness that the proposed recommendations are the result of consultation with schools

Creating a coherent system

A modern national curriculum must be driven by equity, threaded with purpose, built with the right ingredients, and implemented with discipline. Each layer strengthens the others, creating a coherent system that prepares every child for life, learning and work in modern Britain.

- **KEY DRIVERS (WHY)**

SEND • disadvantaged • life in modern Britain

- **GOLDEN THREADS (WHAT)**

oracy • citizenship • employability & careers • wider experience • school-centred design & local context

- **KEY INGREDIENTS (HOW)**

space • digital curriculum • practical application • equitable accountability • KS2→KS3 transition • subject specificity & teacher autonomy • workload • partnerships

- **IMPLEMENTATION (MAKING IT WORK)**

EEF 2024: Diagnose → Plan → Deliver → Sustain



A successful example of system-wide CPD

Introduction of Ofsted framework 2018

- Nationwide roadshows
- Included rationale behind changes linked to improving learning
- Training materials available for schools to use
- Reasonably long lead in timeframe and flexibility in transition period

Factors contributing to successful implementation

- Included science of learning
- Shared understanding of vision and purpose
- Quality training materials that school leaders were able to adapt
- Time for schools to understand and make changes

Areas of focus

- Creating space
- Digital curriculum
- Practical emphasis
- Oracy
- Citizenship focus for modern Britain
- Reflecting a diverse community
- Accountability & qualifications
- KS3 & transition
- SEND measures

Challenge for schools: the curriculum is too narrow resulting in distorting school priorities

- Arts and creative subjects have been disproportionately squeezed
- Accountability pressures shape the enacted curriculum more than educational purpose
- Progress 8, EBacc, and high-stakes exams drive narrowing
- Teachers feel they are “delivering content” rather than shaping learning
- Schools are forced to prioritise exam-measured subjects
- KS3 is often shortened to two years, reducing entitlement and depth
- Leaders know they must balance accountability with breadth - tension

Recommendation to create more space in the timetable as the National Curriculum is only a part of the Curriculum

- Greater clarity on essential content and foundational concepts reduces ambiguity and duplication
- Subjects like Music (more defined pillars) and Computing (stronger digital literacy) become clearer and more teachable
- Less content at GCSE and tighter sequencing across KS1–4 create room for depth, not breadth
- A more coherent curriculum strengthens equity of opportunity, especially for pupils who rely on school for access to knowledge
- Stretch for high attainers
- Extended opportunities

Recommendation to create more space in the timetable.

How is space currently used by schools?

- Dominated by exam preparation
- 1 week citizenship
- 1 week learning consolidation
- Weekly PD (character, human rights, RRS, School of Sanctuary & other kite marks)
- Localised priorities e.g. local history, enterprise
- Careers education

Recommendation to create more space in the timetable.

How would leaders like to use space?

- To build learning, employability and life skills
- To develop hinterland knowledge (depth & experiences)
- To enable research and project management
- To promote understanding of the breadth of humanity and how to contribute to a better society
- To create conditions and opportunities for expression: debate, drama, structured dialogue, oracy
- To deepen understanding of concepts by using them in problem solving
- Enrichment activities e.g. cadets to really improve skills

Recommendation to create more space in the timetable.

An example of successful enrichment.

Cadets: Proven Impact on Disadvantaged Young People

- Participation in Cadet Forces significantly boosts school performance, motivation, and career prospects
- Impact is especially strong for disadvantaged pupils, supported by data from 5,500 cadets
- Cadets show higher self-efficacy — confidence, motivation, self-esteem, and belief in their ability to influence their environment
- Longitudinal data shows no gap between FSM and non-FSM cadets, suggesting cadet participation raises self-efficacy for disadvantaged pupils
- 97% of teachers, social workers and police officers who volunteer as CFAVs believe cadets are particularly beneficial for disadvantaged young people

Cadets: Skills & Attributes Developed

- Cadet participation builds a powerful set of personal and professional competencies:**
- Clear communication with diverse audiences
 - Leadership: planning, motivating and directing a team
 - Resilience: persisting through challenge and setbacks
 - Teamwork: contributing, supporting others, following instructions
 - Social skills: adapting behaviour to achieve positive outcomes
 - Understanding diversity and working with different strengths and talents
 - Personal confidence to apply skills in varied contexts

Recommendation to create more space in the timetable.

What needs to change to create more space?

- Greater subject specificity needed to avoid overload and reliance on schemes; teachers need clarity on depth (e.g., beyond “Teach the Tudors”) or broad end of KS expectations in Art & Design
- Primary curriculum too broad:
 - basics squeezed
 - higher attainers underserved
 - depth needed across subjects
 - emphasis on recall of facts
 - space to use and apply that knowledge
- Realistic expectations required: distinguish essentials from “nice to do” within limited time.
- Clarification on how NC time is allocated
- Shift towards mastery-based assessment, not short-term recall

Recommendation to create a digital National Curriculum

- Develop the national curriculum as a digital product that can support teachers to navigate content easily and to see and make connections across key stages and disciplines
- Enable horizontal and vertical coherence
- Progression model

- Scope for exemplification to include SOW, case studies, exemplification of expected standards, moderation
- All resources easily accessible in one place would make significant difference to planning and work load
- Should not rely on Oak Academy resources but could involve subject organizations

Recommendation to create a digital National Curriculum – practitioner view

- Loved it and can't understand why it's taken so long
- Scope for exemplification to include SOW, case studies, exemplification of expected standards, moderation
- All resources easily accessible in one place would make significant difference to planning and work load

Move to ensure more practical opportunities

- Make limited revisions to the Key Stage 1 to 3 Art and Design Programmes of Study to clarify and exemplify the knowledge and skills pupils should develop, including through their own creative practice, reflection and critical engagement
- Ensure that realising designs remains integral to pupils' experience of D&T
- Ensures that sufficient detail in the food and nutrition curriculum sets clear expectations about what should be taught at each key stage to reflect the fact that the subject develops skills for life as well as progression to further study
- Clarifying and reinforcing requirements for fieldwork in Geography
- The content of Key Stage 4 mandatory non-assessed PE should be revised to ensure that it focuses primarily on physical activity

Move to ensure more practical opportunities

- Ensures that the Science curriculum more clearly articulates the purpose and expectations of high-quality practical work in supporting the building of substantive knowledge and the development of important skills and procedural knowledge
- English curriculum should include more clearly drawing out curriculum requirements for speaking and listening, as well as Drama. In particular, more clarity and specificity at Key Stage 3 should improve coherence between primary and secondary
- Introduce an oracy framework to support practice and to complement the existing frameworks for reading and writing

Move to ensure more practical opportunities. The reality.

- Practical learning has been reduced to watching YouTube videos due to exam pressure and limited time for hands-on work
- Practical DT offer often depends on kits and construction toys (e.g., Strawbees for STEM construction and creativity)
- Food taught once per year
- Science often limited to teacher demonstration; CPD and technical support needed
- Have devices shifted thinking about the need for practical learning?
- Not all online resources (e.g., Oak cooking modules) replace hands-on experience

Move to ensure more practical opportunities.

What are the challenges for schools?

- Effective practical work requires classroom management, discipline, and technical support, but technicians are hard to recruit and poorly paid relative to the expertise and risk involved
- Teachers have lost confidence and practical skills as opportunities have diminished.
- Many practical spaces have been repurposed (D&T rooms, catering kitchens, outdoor space, workshops), reducing capacity
- Schools face financial pressures—urgent maintenance (e.g., leaking roof) competes with investment in practical learning
- Outdoor PE spaces need significant refurbishment, yet physical activity is essential as pupil health and fitness decline
- CPD and technical support needed to ensure practical elements for all subjects
- Storage space is an ongoing constraint
- Financial crisis means less recourse to voluntary contributions
- Large class sizes & subject expertise

Recommendation to increase the importance of oracy

Schools welcome this proposal but expressed some concerns

- Teachers lack confidence and experience
- Need clear guidance and framework on what constitutes expected standards
- Needs to run through every subject with identified opportunities to develop not just added on to English
- Great scope for exemplification
- CPD will be key to success

Recommendations for a Citizenship curriculum

- Introduce a statutory measure to ensure that all pupils are taught a core body of essential Citizenship content at primary (including elements of financial and media literacy, and climate change and sustainability)
- Improve the efficacy of primary Citizenship by clarifying the purpose and content of the Key Stage 1 and 2 curriculum and remove any content that duplicates the new Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Programme of Study
- Update the secondary Programmes of Study for Citizenship to clarify their purpose, improve specificity and improve progression from Key Stage 3 to 4 or to the optional GCSE (including a renewed focus on financial literacy, media literacy, climate and sustainability, equality duties and challenging discrimination, and democracy and government)

Citizenship & Personal Development (PSHEC). Practitioner view.

- Pleased that guidance is being updated to reflect modern Britain
- General impressions are that this is already happening in primary under umbrella of PSHEC
- Contextualised safeguarding must be embedded so pupils understand risks in their real world
- One secondary was considering revitalising form tutor role to include elements of citizenship
- Careers education should sit alongside citizenship

Accountability: Key Stage 1

- Ensures that the STA works with the DfE to find ways to encourage take-up of optional Key Stage 1 assessments
- Ensures that the STA works with DfE to explore approaches for assessing progress for the small minority of pupils with certain SEND needs that make the Phonics Screening Check inaccessible. This assessment should be administered in the school setting

Accountability: Key Stage 2

- Ensure that the STA works with DfE to explore if access arrangements can be refined for pupils with certain SEND that make the Multiplication Tables Check inaccessible. This assessment should continue to be administered in a school setting
- Develops an improved teacher assessment framework to provide teachers with clarity and include a greater focus on writing fluency
 - Reviews external moderation processes and look to strengthen peer moderation between schools, with the aim of embedding good practice to improve moderation in years where schools are not selected for external moderation and improving consistency between external judgements
 - Replaces the current grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) test with an amended test, which retains some elements of the current GPS test but with new tasks to better assess composition and application of grammar and punctuation
 - Once the new test is established in schools, the DfE may wish to consider whether the role of the test in accountability remain as stands, or whether any changes, such as including the new test in headline measures, should be explored

Accountability: responses KS 1 KS 2

Schools were reluctant to take up KS 1 and KS 3 tests

- Leads to curriculum narrowing
- Takes a lot of time away from other curriculum priorities
- KS 1 need small group administration
- Teachers already know what the children can do
- Schools have a range of different tests to draw on should they feel the need
- Increases teacher workload for no particular gain

KS 2

- Grammar test doesn't serve any purpose
- Multiplication Check needs an overhaul to include inverse operations and reasoning, not just rote recall

Accountability: Key Stage 3

- Introduce diagnostic assessment for key components of Maths and English to be taken during Year 8 to support teachers to address students' needs and ensure that they are well prepared to progress into Key Stage 4
- Commission the design and trialling of the test, with a view to making it mandatory if the pilots demonstrate that this is an effective approach

Accountability KS3 responses

- Year 8 disengagement dip is significant; international models (e.g., Denmark, Finland) show higher engagement with no formal assessments at this stage
- Introducing a Year 8 test is unnecessary: schools already use diagnostics such as NGRT, and additional testing risks narrowing the curriculum
- A more purposeful KS3 is needed: fresh content, stronger challenge, and meaningful progression, not repetition or additional testing

Conclusions: factors needed to support successful implementation

In general school leaders and teachers feel positive about proposed curriculum but are wary of the time and resources needed to implement it.

Consideration should be given to ensuring

- An appropriate lead-in to full implementation to enable schools to prepare thoroughly
- Schools have options to implement different parts at different stages according to local contexts
- Resources (including the infrastructure) to support introduction of a new curriculum are readily available
- Schools have time to familiarise themselves with changes and how they effect their existing provision
- New elements are included in ITT including classroom pedagogy
- Effective CPD is essential
- Use of change models already in wide circulation (EEF in NPQs)

A changing workforce

- Teaching is no longer a job for life, shifting expectations around career length and progression
- Recruitment and retention require new strategies, recognising a more mobile workforce
- Schools must prioritise support, development, workload reduction and flexible pathways to keep talented staff
- Strong culture, purposeful CPD and wellbeing-focused leadership are now essential to sustaining the profession

High quality CPD is essential for successful implementation of these curriculum changes

CPD should include developing:

- Understanding of the evidence, purpose and vision of the new curriculum
- Understanding of the subject content and any changes to specific subjects
- Developing pedagogical and classroom organisational skills e.g. additional challenge and depth for some students whilst (Teachers are used to pre-built curricula and often lack confidence in deepening learning, especially alongside SEND needs)
- Recognising opportunities for integrating golden threads into all curriculum areas e.g. oracy
- Treat as a process and real development as opposed to a one off event