

What is the purpose of a curriculum?

At a national level, the purpose of a curriculum is to set out an entitlement for all pupils to the knowledge and learning that our society determines is the most powerful and important for a well-rounded education. At a school and classroom level, the purpose of a curriculum is to provide coherence.

By 'coherence' we mean how content, assessment, pedagogy and teaching materials align and reinforce each other. This is important because when curriculum lacks coherence, it is both harder to teach and harder for children to locate and place their new knowledge (Myatt, 2018). Only a well-designed curriculum enables successful learning.

National, school and classroom-level curriculum

In order to understand your role in curriculum design, let us look at the differences between the National Curriculum and EYFS statutory framework and the curriculum at a school and classroom level more closely. The National Curriculum provides programmes of study and attainment targets for each National Curriculum subject, setting out the knowledge and skills to be taught at each key stage. The EYFS statutory framework provides areas of learning and development which should be covered, early learning goals that pupils should work towards and assessment arrangements for measuring progress against these. A school's curriculum enables it to set out its vision for the knowledge, skills and values that its pupils will learn, encompassing the National Curriculum within a coherent wider vision for successful learning. At the classroom level, the curriculum will also include pedagogy (how the curriculum will be taught) and how pupils will be assessed.

Curriculum as a road map

A roadmap is a helpful metaphor when thinking about designing a curriculum: a roadmap shows the destination (the 'what' and 'why' of the content to be taught) and the route to get there (the teaching practices most likely to lead to successful learning). When good schemes of work are in place, they can reduce teacher workload and give teachers autonomy to adjust the 'route' as the scheme unfolds, lesson by lesson (Myatt 2018).

Hear from an expert

Listen to Ed Vainker, Executive Head at Reach Academy Feltham talk about what he thinks the purpose of curriculum is for pupils, teachers and schools.



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