

Key Stage 3 D&T National Curriculum 2014 – Myths and Facts

Myth: The Government will be publishing non-statutory guidance to support schools with implementation of the new National Curriculum. If we wait long enough it will appear.

Fact: There is no indication that the Government intends to provide any meaningful non-statutory guidance to support schools with implementation – certainly not in D&T.

Your local authority may well provide some general guidance on implementation and, if you are very fortunate, some guidance specifically on D&T. However, very few local authorities have the in-house expertise to provide specialist D&T support. Educational publishers are currently producing guidance, but its quality will depend on whether their authors have the necessary subject expertise in D&T within the context of the new curriculum. It is important to evaluate what is being offered with a critical eye. The quality will be variable.

It is certainly the case that National Curriculum Expert Groups, working independently of the Government, have developed high quality guidance for schools on implementation, including specific guidance on D&T. See <http://www.expertsubjectgroups.co.uk> for links to all the materials. For D&T, the materials were developed in collaboration with the D&T Association and are hosted at <https://www.data.org.uk/for-education/curriculum/dt-national-curriculum-for-england-2014>. The D&T Association has provided guidance published in D&T Practice and is providing CPD through Branch meetings and other events – see www.data.org.uk.

Myth: The new National Curriculum is still in draft.

Fact: The final statutory version was published online by the Government on 11th September 2013. This is the version that all local authority maintained schools must teach from this September. As no printed copies were sent out by the Government, some schools have been under the misapprehension that nothing has been finalised – it has.

Myth: I've heard that nothing has changed in the new D&T programmes of study.

Fact: Some well-meaning commentators have downplayed the changes in the D&T curriculum to reassure schools that they can simply reuse existing curriculum planning. It is true that much of the new National Curriculum for D&T is the same as the previous version – in fact it was designed to build on existing good planning and practice. But there are some significant new elements. These include, for example, a requirement that pupils in all key stages follow an 'iterative' design and make process that children are taught to be 'innovative'. For example, at key stage 3 pupils might be asked to consider a given context such as travelling to school. They might be introduced to a new smart material or small low cost programmable printed circuit board and explore the potential for use in products to ensure pupil safety. They develop ideas by trying them out – modelling and testing, modifying and refining. Also, the subject is now in two strands – designing and making, and cooking and nutrition. So plenty of food for thought in the lead up to and beyond September!

Myth: We are being expected to teach all the new requirements equally well from this September.

Fact: That is not realistic or desirable. The introduction of the new National Curriculum is certainly daunting. Some schools will feel under considerable pressure to have everything up to scratch from 1st September. Even if this were achievable in relation to mapping the curriculum, teaching all the new elements effectively will take time and require guidance and CPD to develop the necessary subject expertise, together with new resources in some areas. The overriding message is don't panic! An appropriate strategy would be to draw up an action plan for the subject and improve the teaching of the new requirements over a period of time, to ensure that the curriculum is properly embedded and well taught. Use the freely available guidance at <https://www.data.org.uk/for-education/curriculum/dt-national-curriculum-for-england-2014> to help with this process.

Myth: If something is no longer a requirement in the new programmes of study then it is no longer important.

Fact: If something is no longer a requirement it is up to schools to decide whether or not to continue to teach it. It does not mean it is no longer important. As a non-core subject, the amount of content has been reduced in the new requirements for D&T and some important elements, such as 'planning the sequence of making' and addressing issues of sustainability have been removed. Both of these are considered to be fundamental to good practice in the subject, even though they no longer part of the National Curriculum.

Myth: The Government haven't got round to writing the new level descriptions yet, but they will.

Fact: There is no intention by the Government to provide new level descriptions.

Myth: We can continue to use the levels provided in the 2007 PoS.

If your school used the level descriptions in the previous National Curriculum, be wary of using them in the long term to assess children's progress. The expectations in the new programmes of study are not compatible with the level descriptions which were produced to accompany the 2007 programmes of study. You will need to develop a new assessment system. There is some free advice and guiding principles to help you do this at <https://www.data.org.uk/for-education/curriculum/dt-national-curriculum-for-england-2014>

Myth: It's not worth academies, free schools and independent schools looking at the new programmes of study for D&T.

Fact: It is very worthwhile academies, free schools and independent schools looking closely at the new programmes of study. They are based on best practice in the subject, written by subject experts and form a sound basis for teaching D&T in all schools, not just local authority maintained schools.

Myth: There is no point in reading the Purpose of Study and Aims for D&T.

Fact: Everything in the new programmes of study is important and the document is intended to be read as a whole. As well as following the Subject Content, planning and teaching also needs to reflect the Purpose of Study and Aims in a way that is appropriate to children's ages.

Myth: We can teach the new programmes of study exclusively through a skills-based approach.

Fact: The new programmes of study for D&T are a mixture of knowledge, understanding and skills – all of which play an important role in children's learning. Design and technology is often perceived as a skills-based subject, with a focus on designing skills and making skills. In reality, designing and making requires a considerable amount of knowledge and understanding. Sometimes this comes from other subjects such as maths (e.g. geometry and measurement) or science (e.g. properties of materials), but there is also a body of technical knowledge and understanding that is unique to D&T, such as exploring and using mechanisms (e.g. how more advanced electrical and electronic systems can be powered and used in products pupils design and make).

Myth: The new requirements are all about children learning facts.

Fact: Nothing could be further from the truth. Most of the technical knowledge in the new programmes of study is conceptual (e.g. understanding and using the idea of a system) or procedural (e.g. understanding how to strengthen a structure) and all of it is applied when children design and make products. There is no list of facts or information to be learnt in the new requirements.

Myth: We can teach the new requirements effectively by combining D&T with Art and Design or Science – in order to save time and bring about greater efficiency.

Fact: It is doubtful whether the quality or integrity of pupils' learning in D&T can be maintained if it is *combined* with another subject. Evidence suggests that such an approach is likely to water down the nature of the subject as set out in the new programmes of study and undermine both coverage and progression. By comparison, it is very advantageous to make intelligent *connections* between D&T and other subjects. In fact maths, science, computing and art and design are listed in the Purpose of Study as subjects that pupils should draw on when carrying out D&T activities.

Myth: 'Cooking and nutrition' should be taught separately from 'designing and making'.

Fact: There is no requirement for the two strands to be taught separately. In fact the D&T Association recommends that 'cooking and nutrition' are linked with 'designing and making'. This means that as part of their food technology projects, children will apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition, learn how to cook a repertoire of dishes and become competent in a range of cooking techniques.

Myth: It doesn't matter if we don't cover all the material areas listed in the programmes of study.

Fact: In the new National Curriculum children continue to have an entitlement to a broad experience of D&T and the new requirements safeguard this. Building on a range of materials that they will have used at Key Stage 2, the Key Stage 3 PoS requires that pupils use a more complex range of materials, components and ingredients such as smart and modern materials.

Myth: The examples in the new programmes of study have to be followed.

Fact: The examples are just that – examples – and therefore non-statutory. In the case of the D&T requirements they provide a helpful guide to the range of experiences that should be offered. Schools can choose to adopt, adapt or add to the example content as they see fit.