



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 16 April 2013**  
**Your comments must reach us by that date.**

**Reform of the National Curriculum in  
England:**

**Consultation Response Form**

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Reason for confidentiality:

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If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Public Communications Unit by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please tick one category that best describes you as a respondent

<input type="checkbox"/> Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Special School
<input type="checkbox"/> Organisation representing school teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Subject Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Further Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Academy	<input type="checkbox"/> Employer/Business Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please Specify: Religion or belief group

The British Humanist Association is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, support and represent the non-religious, and promote a secular state and equal treatment in law and policy of everyone, regardless of religion or belief.

Founded in 1896, we have around 30,000 members and supporters, and over 70 local and special interest affiliates. Our policies are informed with the support of over 120 of the UK's most prominent philosophers, scientists, and other thinkers and experts and we seek to advance them with the help of over 100 parliamentarians in membership of the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group. Our trained and accredited celebrants conduct funerals and other non-religious ceremonies attended by over 500,000 people each year.

### **Our recommendations**

Throughout the subsequent response we make various recommendations we would like to see implemented. For convenience we have gathered these together here.

Question 1/section 2 ('The school curriculum in England'):

- We would like to Ofsted's definition of spiritual development (or a comparably inclusive definition) be added to the framework, or a reference to Ofsted's definition be added, to make clear that spirituality in this context is defined in an inclusive manner.
- We believe that at a bare minimum, section 2 of the framework should set out what schools *are* required by statute to teach in sex education. We also think there should be a reference to relationships education, to make clear that sex education should not be taught in isolation.
- We would welcome an addition to the framework to make clear that teaching

pseudoscience is unacceptable. We think this would work best in section 2, as several subjects are affected, but it could also appear in the science section

- We would welcome a statement being added to the framework to encourage schools to ensure that collective worship is as inclusive as possible, within the confines of the law. The Government has made similar statements in the past
- We think that the reference in the current national curriculum to ‘opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life’ should not have been changed to ‘of later life’. We also believe that ‘social’ should not be removed from spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Question 2/subject aims:

- some humanists argue that the whole curriculum should be derived from setting out the basic aims of what we are trying to achieve. From this position, we can establish what subject content we need to include in order to meet our aims.

Question 3/section 6 (programmes of study and attainment targets):

- **Sex education in science:** We are concerned that the proposed sex education elements of the curriculum are insufficient in ensuring that pupils’ needs are met, and in a few places, actively discourage education in this area. It is vital that sex education is age appropriate, but we believe that by year six, pupils should understand the basics of anatomy, puberty and sexual reproduction. We are alarmed that there is currently no mention of puberty at all.
- **Evolution:** We are very pleased that evolution has been included in the primary national curriculum for the first time. Scientists and educational experts tell us that evolution is such a core topic in biology that it should be taught at this stage, and not from year ten, as is currently the case.
- **The scientific method:** We welcome the support for teaching the scientific method in the aims, and the presence of the ‘Working scientifically’ sections – especially now they have been integrated throughout all the other sections. But there are still weaknesses in terms of why the scientific method works, for example no discussion at all of correlation and causation, or of reliability of evidence.
- **Citizenship:** We regret the removal of all references to equalities, human rights and freedom of speech, all of which we believe are very important. Young people should understand what they are, why they are so important and where they are found in UK and international law. We also have specific concerns about this subject as it is taught in ‘faith’ schools.
- **English:** In the ‘Purpose of study’ section, it is stated that ‘Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, spiritually and socially.’ ‘Morally’ should be added to this list.
- **History:** In twentieth century history, there is a section on ‘society and social reform, including the abolition of capital punishment, the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality, and the Race Relations Act’. Added to this should be ‘the rapid growth of non-religious beliefs and identities’.

Question 9/impact on protected characteristic groups:

- Key Stage 4 citizenship says that 'Pupils should be taught about diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.' This should also refer to non-religious identities.

### **Our expertise in education**

The BHA has a long history of work in education, children's rights and equality, with expertise in the 'religion or belief' strand. We provide materials and advice to parents, governors, students, teachers and academics. We also work closely with others on wider equalities issues in a range of forums. The BHA is a member of the National Children's Bureau Sex Education Forum (SEF), the Children's Rights Alliance for England and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales.

**As a source of advice:** As an organisation supporting non-religious parents and young people, we have experience in the issues they face at school. In fact, the most frequent issue raised with the BHA is parents looking for support after distressing experiences related to Collective Worship, particularly in primary schools.

**Involvement in RE and values education:** We promote education being broad, balanced, objective, and humanistic in the widest sense of the term, and have a history of work in religious, moral and values education. The BHA was a co-founder in 1973 of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and in the 1990s of the Values Education Council of the UK. The latter ceased to exist in 2008, but our involvement in the REC continues today, with our current Chief Executive serving as a trustee and director since 2006. In addition BHA members locally are involved in about two-thirds of the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) in England and Wales, either as full members, co-opted members or observers.

**Working across the religion or belief spectrum:** The BHA is also an organisation committed to working with those of other beliefs for the common good in education. In the 1970s, years before the foundation of bodies such as the Inter-Faith Network, we were co-founders of the Standing Council on Inter-Faith Dialogue in Education (SCIFDE) together with Jews and Christians; along with religious believers, we were also co-founders of the Social Morality Council. Today, many BHA members work alongside those with different beliefs on their local SACRE or inter-faith forums. Many play an active part in the work of other organisations such as the 3FF, an organisation that provides speaker panels for schools with speakers from across the religion and belief spectrum.

**Spiritual development:** The BHA has extensive expertise in the area of 'spiritual' development for the non-religious. We also have a long history of involvement in the concept, which was arguably invented in 1961 by educationalist and future BHA President James Hemming and the philosopher Harold Blackham, later the first

Executive Director of the BHA. At the BHA's conference in 1969, the distinguished political theorist Sir Bernard Crick, future Vice President of the BHA, presented a paper in which he linked spiritual development and citizenship for the first time. Crick advocated the virtue of toleration in the ideal state, saying 'the most important thing about living in any complex and reasonably civilized community is to perceive it is pluralistic.' He also argued that young people should learn about the different beliefs which are common in society as part of the school curriculum, and that people of different beliefs could cooperate for the common good.

Humanists do not have a common position on the use of the term 'spirituality', but the BHA believes that where it is used, it should be used in a manner that is inclusive of the non-religious – as is the case in education.

**Evolution and creationism:** We co-ordinated the 'Teach evolution, not creationism!' campaign, which was also supported by organisations such as the Association for Science Education and the British Science Association, and by thirty leading scientists including Sir David Attenborough, Professor Colin Blakemore, Professor Richard Dawkins, Sir Paul Nurse and Revd Professor Michael Reiss. It was supported by an e-petition signed by almost 25,000 British citizens.<sup>1</sup>

**Previous consultation responses:** We previously responded to the national curriculum review's call for evidence in April 2011<sup>2</sup> and the draft primary national curriculum for science in August 2012,<sup>3</sup> and will draw on those responses as appropriate in responding to this consultation.

### **BHA policy on education**

We are interested in education for three reasons:

- we aim for the UK to be secular state with no privilege or discrimination on grounds of religion or belief. The continuing religious discrimination in our state school system is therefore a concern for us
- we aim for Humanism to be better understood as an ethical and fulfilling non-religious approach to life and so we have an interest in ensuring that it features on the school curriculum on equal terms with religions
- humanists see education as a vital process and have been rich contributors to both the philosophy and practice of education

We have an interest in promoting better education that will meet these aspirations because we promote humanist perspectives in public debate and policy.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Teach evolution, not creationism' Government e-petition: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/1617>

<sup>2</sup> *National Curriculum Review - Call for Evidence: Submission from the British Humanist Association (BHA)*, April 2011: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1bha-response-curriculum-review.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Draft National Curriculum for science Key Stages 1-2: Response from the British Humanist Association (BHA)*, 15 August 2012: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/draft-national-curriculum-for-science-key-stages-1-2-response-from-the-bha.pdf>

We concentrate on laws and policies that we believe are discriminatory and violate principles of human rights or equality in state-funded schools or on matters where we have a distinctive humanist view. For example we work for progressive reform of the school curriculum and inclusive assemblies in place of mandatory religious worship.

One of our aims is to promote a humanist perspective on public policy issues. Many humanists have had a profound interest in education and so the school curriculum has naturally been a focus for us. In practice, we concentrate on aspects of the curriculum where the humanist voice is excluded or weak or where others are actively promoting policies at odds with our principles.

### **Moral and values education**

As a general comment, we regret that the national curriculum framework contains almost no moral and values education at all. Both Religious Education and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education have been excluded (with the former, at any rate, needing reform to be a wider subject about philosophy and ethics), while Citizenship has much of the values content removed from it.

As we said in our submission to the Rose Review in 2008, we believe that the school curriculum should:<sup>4</sup>

- develop children's thinking skills through teaching critical thinking and philosophy;
- foster the natural curiosity of children by encouraging them to explore the world around them and the wider world;
- make it clear to children that knowledge can be gained and mysteries solved by investigation and experience;
- encourage socialisation of children;
- encourage moral development and foster acceptance of others and their similarities and differences and foster acceptance of oneself and the fact one may be different, together with nurturing a feeling of self-worth;
- encourage the creativity of children in art, construction, music, dance, and all the other ways that it can be expressed.

Are you answering this consultation in response to particular subjects? Please tick all those that apply.

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<sup>4</sup> Submission to the Rose Review of the Primary Curriculum from the British Humanist Association, April 2008

English

mathematics

science

art & design

citizenship

computing

design & technology

geography

history

languages

music

physical education

Not applicable

## 1 Do you have any comments on the proposed aims for the National Curriculum as a whole as set out in the framework document?

Comments: We have commented on five different aspects of section 2 of the framework in response to this question:

- **‘Spirituality’**, and the need to define it in a manner that is clearly inclusive
- **PSHE and sex education**, specifically expanding what is included to set out the statutory situation clearly
- **Pseudoscience**, and the need for a general statement to be added to prevent the teaching of creationism and ‘intelligent design’
- **Collective Worship**, specifically the need to encourage schools to hold assemblies that are as inclusive as possible within the confines of the law
- Whether some of the **changes to the overarching requirements** of the curriculum are helpful

With regards to section 3 of the framework document, we have made some general comments about the place of aims in the national curriculum in our response to question 2.

### **‘Spirituality’**

Paragraph 2.1 of the framework document says that each school must offer a curriculum which ‘promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society’.

The BHA has extensive expertise in the area of ‘spiritual’ development for the non-religious, and has a long history of involvement in the concept. We particularly like Ofsted’s definition, which we helped to develop, from their 2004 guidance on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development:

Spiritual development is the development of the non-material element of a human being which animates and sustains us and, depending on our point of view, either ends or continues in some form when we die. It is about the development of a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose. It is about the development of a pupil’s ‘spirit’. Some people may call it the development of a pupil’s ‘soul’; others as the development of ‘personality’ or ‘character’.<sup>5</sup>

This definition is clearly inclusive of all children, including the non-religious majority.

However, we are concerned that the term, as it is used in the framework, is undefined, and that some teachers may, as a consequence, interpret it in a way which is not inclusive of the non-religious. **In order to avoid this, we would like to see this**

<sup>5</sup> Ofsted, *Promoting and evaluating pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*, 2004: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/promoting-and-evaluating-pupils-spiritual-moral-social-and-cultural-development>

**definition of spiritual development (or a comparably inclusive definition) be added to the framework, or a reference to Ofsted’s definition be added.**

Humanists do not have a common position on the use of the term ‘spirituality’, but the BHA believes that where it is used, it should be used in a manner that is inclusive.

**PSHE and sex education**

Paragraph 2.1 says that ‘All state schools are also required to make provision for... sex education to pupils in secondary education.’ In addition, paragraph 2.3 adds that ‘All schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), drawing on good practice.’

We believe that every school should teach a full and comprehensive curriculum in PSHE, and are concerned that this continues not to be the case, with many schools teaching inadequate sex and relationships education in particular. We acknowledge that this consultation is not proposing to alter the status of PSHE in the national curriculum. However, **we believe that at a bare minimum, these paragraphs should set out what schools are required by statute to teach**, namely that:

- “sex education” in secondary schools includes education about— (a) Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and (b) any other sexually transmitted disease.<sup>6</sup>
- schools must have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State on sex education.<sup>7</sup>
- Paragraph 2.2 also says that ‘All schools must publish their school curriculum by subject and academic year online.’ It should add that schools must make, and keep up to date, a separate written statement of their policy with regard to the provision of sex education.<sup>8</sup>

**We also think there should be a reference to relationships education, to make clear that sex education should not be taught in isolation.** The two areas are so interdependent that to teach one without the other puts at risk young people’s safety and the health of their relationships.

**Pseudoscience**

We oppose the teaching of pseudoscience, in particular creationism and ‘intelligent design’ as scientifically valid. This is a problem in science, PSHE, RE and Collective Worship. In recent years it has been a particularly prominent problem with respect to groups applying to establish Free Schools. However, we are also frequently contacted by parents and teachers from maintained schools, particularly at Church of England primary schools, expressing concern that creationism is being taught. We have given a

<sup>6</sup> Section 579 of the Education Act 1996: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/579>

<sup>7</sup> Section 403 of the Education Act 1996: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/403>

<sup>8</sup> Section 404 of the Education Act 1996: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/404>

few recent examples of individuals that have contacted us in our response to question 14.

We welcome the strong line that Michael Gove and his Department has taken on the teaching of creationism, and the consequential insertion of section 24A into the Free School model funding agreement, which states that schools 'shall not make provision in the context of any subject for the teaching, as an evidence-based view or theory, of any view or theory that is contrary to established scientific and/or historical evidence and explanation.'<sup>9</sup>

With regards to science specifically, we have been told by the organisation Creation Ministries International that they address students in science lessons in schools. Similarly, the group Truth in Science, launched during the previous Parliament, seeks to influence the teaching of science.

In September 2007, following on from the launch of Truth in Science, the Department for Education and Skills published 'Guidance on the Place of Creationism and Intelligent Design in Science Lessons'. This stated that 'Creationism and intelligent design are not part of the science National Curriculum programmes of study and should not be taught as science... Any questions about creationism and intelligent design which arise in science lessons, for example as a result of media coverage, could provide the opportunity to explain or explore why they are not considered to be scientific theories and, in the right context, why evolution is considered to be a scientific theory.'<sup>10</sup> This guidance was very welcome.

However, shortly after the 2010 election, the guidance was removed from the DfE's website. This was justified to us by civil servants with the explanation that 'As part of a Department wide exercise to reduce bureaucracy on schools the Department's formal guidance on creationism and intelligent design was removed from the website, along with much other guidance, but we continue to draw on it. We make clear that creationism and intelligent design are not scientific theories and do not form part of the science National Curriculum or the GCSE and GCE A level subject criteria and should not be taught as science. This, together with the Secretary of State's very clear and public stance on this matter, provides a very strong message to all schools, including free schools.'

However are seriously concerned that there is now no guidance for schools on this matter, and instead the Department's line in the media is being relied upon. The examples we have provided shows that a clearer steer is needed to ensure that no pseudoscience is taught in Free Schools.

**We would therefore welcome an addition to the framework to make clear that**

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<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools/guidance/b0074737/funding-agreement/single>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.humanism.org.uk/uploads/documents/1sia-creationism-guidance-180907-final.pdf>

**teaching pseudoscience is unacceptable. We think this would work best in section 2, as several subjects are affected, but it could also appear in the science section.** This could perhaps draw upon the 2007 guidance, for example the portion quoted above. Or it could more widely make clear that the teaching of any form of pseudoscience is unacceptable, along the lines of section 24A.

### **Collective Worship**

Paragraph 2.1 says that 'All state schools are also required to make provision for a daily act of collective worship'.

The Government recently stated that 'The law requires schools to provide an experience of collective worship that is relevant to all pupils, no matter what their background or beliefs, to ensure collective worship is presented in a way that benefits the spiritual, moral and cultural development of all children and young people and of society. The purpose of the law is an educational one, not to indoctrinate or influence pupils' personal beliefs.'<sup>11</sup>

While we do not think that it is possible to provide religious worship while remaining relevant to all pupils, **we nonetheless believe that if schools were aware of this statement, it would encourage them to provide more inclusive worship than often currently occurs. Therefore we would welcome something similar being added to the national curriculum.**

### **Overarching requirements**

Paragraph 2.1 of the framework document says that each school must offer a curriculum which 'prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life', and which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.'

**We share the concerns articulated by the Sex Education Forum in their response<sup>12</sup> that the reference in the current national curriculum to 'opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life' has been changed to 'of later life'. Many of the experiences that the schools prepare pupils for include experiences that will already be happening at school. This fact should not be lost.**

**We also agree with SEF's concern that 'The removal of "social" development is a serious loss as this is the focus for learning to get along with and understand each other as friends, peers and fellow citizens.'**

<sup>11</sup> See page 2 at

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/4/4%20october%20letter%20to%20lord%20avebury%20about%20collective%20worship.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Sex Education Forum response to Public Consultation on the Draft National Curriculum proposals, 25 March 2013: [http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/13078/sef\\_-\\_nc\\_response\\_25\\_march\\_2013.pdf](http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/13078/sef_-_nc_response_25_march_2013.pdf)

**2 Do you agree that instead of detailed subject-level aims we should free teachers to shape their own curriculum aims based on the content in the programmes of study?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments: Speaking generally, some humanists such as John White, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Education at the Institute of Education, argue that the whole curriculum should be derived from setting out the basic aims of what we are trying to achieve. From this position, we can establish what subject content we need to include in order to meet our aims. Alternatively, it may be hard to see the justification for including certain areas in the national curriculum, or how other areas would be best approached by teachers, if it is not apparent what the curriculum is intending to achieve.

This appears to be true if we look at the citizenship and science curriculums that are in the draft framework. In citizenship, without the subject aims the remaining curriculum will be just over one page long. Aims such as ‘that all pupils develop an interest in, and commitment to, volunteering that they will take with them into adulthood’ are not reiterated in the subject content, so removing the aims will mean that some points are lost.

And in science, aims such as that ‘all pupils are equipped with the scientific knowledge required to understand the **uses and implications** of science, today and for the future’ really help teachers appreciate the importance of educating pupils about the benefits of science and the scientific method as a route to knowledge, as well as the specific subject content. Basic appreciation of the importance of science is vital, and a point that should be repeatedly emphasised. Removing this aim risks losing this point.

Alternatively, if the Government decides to free teachers to shape their own curriculum aims, perhaps the current aims could be left in place as advice to help teachers in this task, or for teachers who want to use them, as well as to indicate the Government’s thinking in deciding what to include in the subject content.

**3 Do you have any comments on the content set out in the draft programmes of study?**

Comments: There are five principal areas in which we would like to respond: sex education, evolution, pseudoscience, the scientific method and citizenship. The first four are aspects of science, and we have already considered pseudoscience in some depth in our response to question 1.

Summarising each of the other areas in turn:

- **Sex education in science:** We are concerned that the proposed sex education elements of the curriculum are insufficient in ensuring that pupils' needs are met, and in a few places, actively discourage education in this area. It is vital that sex education is age appropriate, but we believe that by year six, pupils should understand the basics of anatomy, puberty and sexual reproduction. We are alarmed that there is currently no mention of puberty at all.
- **Evolution:** We are very pleased that evolution has been included in the primary national curriculum for the first time. Scientists and educational experts tell us that evolution is such a core topic in biology that it should be taught at this stage, and not from year ten, as is currently the case.
- **The scientific method:** We welcome the support for teaching the scientific method in the aims, and the presence of the 'Working scientifically' sections – especially now they have been integrated throughout all the other sections. But there are still weaknesses in terms of why the scientific method works, for example no discussion at all of correlation and causation, or of reliability of evidence.
- **Citizenship:** We regret the removal of all references to equalities, human rights and freedom of speech, all of which we believe are very important. Young people should understand what they are, why they are so important and where they are found in UK and international law. We also have specific concerns about this subject as it is taught in 'faith' schools.

We have responded in detail on each topic below. Some of our response reflects what we said in our response last summer to the draft primary science curriculum. We would also like to make briefer responses on English and history.

### **Sex education in science**

We believe that all children of all backgrounds are entitled to full, accurate and age-appropriate sex education, which should equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to prepare them for puberty, make informed decisions about relationships and to effectively safeguard children from sexual exploitation. At a primary age, this means educating younger children about different external body parts and what constitutes inappropriate touching on the part of adults. Older primary children should begin to learn about puberty and the basics of sexual reproduction. Reproduction should be covered in more depth in secondary schools and be joined by teaching about STIs, HIV and AIDS.

This material should also be covered in sex and relationships education (SRE). However, the outcome of the PSHE Review has been that no changes will be made to

the statutory situation with regards to PSHE or SRE. So as a consequence, while secondary schools must teach about STIs, HIV and AIDS, there is no requirement to teach anything else outside of whatever is in national curriculum science. In particular, primary schools do not have to provide any SRE at all. Furthermore, parents can legally opt out their children from any education which is provided, denying pupils this vital knowledge where it is taught. As a result, SRE cannot be relied upon to provide the knowledge that children need and are entitled to in this area, and so there must be strong coverage as part of the science curriculum.

The BHA is a member of the Sex Education Forum, and supports the response it has made to this review.<sup>13</sup>

While there are some welcome changes from the draft primary curriculum published last summer, we believe the draft framework will result in many children not being provided with adequate sex education.

In Key Stage 1, the current programme of study says that 'Pupils should be taught to recognise and compare the main external parts of the bodies of humans and other animals'. The draft programme of study says that 'Pupils should be taught to identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body and say which part of the body is associated with each sense.... Pupils should have plenty of opportunities to learn the names of the main body parts (including head, neck, arms, elbows, legs, knees, face, ears, eyes, hair, mouth, teeth) through games, actions, songs and rhymes.' This list implicitly excludes the external sexual organs, more so than the previous curriculum (by listing body parts, the implication is that those listed parts should be taught and others should not). **It is important that the penis, breasts and vulva/vagina are included at this stage not because pupils should learn about their sexual functions, but because pupils need to learn about their other functions, and for safeguarding purposes.**

In year 2, education about reproduction is actively discouraged, with the statement that pupils 'should not be expected to understand how reproduction occurs.' In year 5, human reproduction is mentioned for the first time, in the context of 'the life cycles common to a variety of animals, including humans'. The removal of the statement, 'In Year 6, pupils will be taught more about reproduction', is welcome. In year 6, 'Pupils should be taught to describe the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals... They should find out about different types of reproduction, including... sexual reproduction in animals... comparing how different animals reproduce and grow'. **While the requirement to teach reproduction in animals is welcome, none of this requires teaching about sexual intercourse in humans, which is what is what needs to occur long before young people start having sex, in order to ensure that when they do start, sex is as likely as possible to be safe and consensual, and also for safeguarding purposes.**

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<sup>13</sup> Sex Education Forum response to Public Consultation on the Draft National Curriculum proposals, 25 March 2013: [http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/13078/sef\\_-\\_nc\\_response\\_25\\_march\\_2013.pdf](http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/13078/sef_-_nc_response_25_march_2013.pdf)

In addition, there is no mention anywhere in the curriculum of puberty. **It is vital that young people are taught about puberty before it starts in order to ensure that they are prepared for the changes to their bodies that will occur.** This needs to be in primary education. The reference to life cycles in year 5 seems like a place where puberty could be mentioned, although this may be too late for some pupils.

Key stage 3 includes teaching about 'reproduction in humans (as an example of a mammal), including the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, menstrual cycle (without details of hormones), gametes, fertilisation, gestation and birth, to include the effect of maternal lifestyle on the foetus through the placenta'. **This is welcome, but is too late to meet many pupils' needs.**

**We are also concerned that there is no specific reference to sexual intercourse.** A school could, conceivably, take an extremely narrow reading of this paragraph and choose to teach anatomy and reproduction post-conception, but avoid intercourse and conception itself. This denial of knowledge would clearly be unacceptable, and we believe the curriculum should be a little bit more explicit in order to avoid such an outcome.

We also dislike the statement 'without details of hormones', which implies that contraception should not be taught about. **Contraception, including hormones, should be taught at key stage 3.**

On that note, the 2007 programme of study included that 'The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to consider how knowledge and understanding of science informs personal and collective decisions, including those on substance abuse and sexual health... Sexual health includes issues related to contraception, pregnancy and disease'. However, **in the draft framework there is no reference to sexual health, contraception, pregnancy, STIs, HIV and AIDS. We believe that young people need to learn about all of these things, and unless they are in the national curriculum, there is a serious risk that some schools will choose not to teach about them.** This would be an unacceptable outcome for young people, who need this knowledge in order to ensure the best outcomes in terms of preventing pregnancy and STIs.<sup>14</sup>

More generally, we are concerned that the lobbying of unrepresentative, ideologically driven pressure groups such as the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), Lovewise and LIFE has had an undue influence on the drafting of the science national curriculum. Conversely, UNESCO's 2009 report, 'International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An evidence-informed approach for schools, teachers and health educators' recommends that the topics of sexual and reproductive

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<sup>14</sup> See *Does sex and relationships education work? A Sex Education Forum evidence briefing*: [http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/494585/sef\\_doessrework\\_2010.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/494585/sef_doessrework_2010.pdf)

anatomy, reproduction, puberty, privacy and bodily integrity are covered from ages 5-8.<sup>15</sup>

**We urge the Government to recognise the need, evidence and international recommendations supporting strong teaching in this area, and to consequently overhaul the relevant portions of the curriculum.**

## Evolution

**We strongly welcome the addition of sections on evolution and inheritance to the years four and six programmes of study, when in the past, evolution was not taught before year ten. We are also pleased to see a section on genetics and evolution in key stages three and four – genetics is another important topic which is currently not covered until key stage four.**

As we set out in our response to the draft primary national curriculum, 'Evolution is widely regarded to be the core topic within the life sciences, and it is difficult to see how pupils can be expected to understand much of biology without having learnt about evolution. As a result, we have long campaigned for the teaching of evolution from a younger age, with support from leading scientists and educational experts.

'In July 2009, a letter from twenty-six of the UK's top scientists and science educators called for evolution to be added to the primary school science curriculum.<sup>16</sup> Signatories included Sir Paul Nurse, Professor Richard Dawkins, Revd Professor Michael Reiss and three Nobel laureates. As a result of this pressure, the then-Labour Government subsequently proposed to include evolution in the primary national curriculum. However, the new curriculum was subsequently abandoned due to the 2010 general election.

'Following on from this, in June 2010, another twenty-six scientists wrote to Michael Gove with a similar call.<sup>17</sup> This was supported by an Early Day Motion tabled by Julian Huppert MP, signed by 103 MPs, calling for 'the Government to ensure that all schools... include the theory of evolution in the science curriculum at both primary and secondary levels'.<sup>18</sup>

'In September 2011, the BHA came together with 30 leading scientists and educators and four other organisations to launch the 'Teach evolution, not creationism!' campaign.<sup>19</sup> Sir David Attenborough was a supporter, along with the Association for Science Education, the British Science Association, the Campaign for Science and Engineering and Ekklesia. This called for 'The teaching of evolution should be included at both primary and secondary levels in the National Curriculum and in all schools', and

<sup>15</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf> – see Key Concept 4

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.humanism.org.uk/uploads/documents/BHA-Scientists-letter-to-DCSF-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.humanism.org.uk/uploads/documents/1LettertoGoveonEvolutioninCurriculumFINAL.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-12/243>

<sup>19</sup> <http://evolutionnotcreationism.org.uk/>

was supported by a similar Government e-petition which garnered almost 25,000 signatures.<sup>20</sup>

### **The scientific method**

As we said in our response to the draft primary curriculum last summer, we believe that it is vital that young people not only learn scientific facts and theories, but understand what the scientific method is, why it works and the positive impact it has had on human society. It is only by understanding science as a process that people will be able to understand how science reaches the conclusions it reaches, and appreciate the veracity of those conclusions as well as their provisional nature.

As such, we are pleased to see the aims of the curriculum include ‘ensur[ing] that pupils... develop understanding of the **nature, processes and methods of science** through different types of science enquiries that help them to answer scientific questions about the world around them’, and ‘are equipped with the scientific knowledge required to understand the **uses and implications** of science, today and for the future.’

We are also pleased to see the ‘Working scientifically’ section throughout each year’s programme of study, and the explanation that this section should be embedded throughout the rest of the learning and not taught separately. We are also very happy to see new ‘Pupils might work scientifically by...’ sections embedded throughout the programmes of study, demonstrating how these sections could be put into practice. This was a change that we called for in our response to the draft primary curriculum last summer.

However, **we are concerned that the ‘Working scientifically’ sections do not sufficiently explore why the scientific method works, in addition to how they work. This should include the nature of evidence, whether evidence is reliable and why it might not be, causation and correlation. Further exploration of why it works would be welcome.**

### **Citizenship**

The draft key stage 3 citizenship says that ‘Citizenship education should develop pupils’ understanding of how the United Kingdom is governed and the rights and responsibilities of its citizens.’ We believe it is very important that young people are taught about rights and responsibilities and so welcome the reference to them.

However, **we regret the removal of any references to equalities and human rights, which were referred to extensively in the 2007 programme of study.** Human rights are so important because they are fundamental and universal standards underpinning the relationship of citizens to each other and to the state. They are the guarantors of rights and freedoms that are relevant to every person, but at the same time are widely

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<sup>20</sup> <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/1617>

misunderstood in the UK today. It is therefore vital that young people understand what they are, why they are so important and where they are found in UK and international law. It is also important that young people understand about equalities legislation.

We support the response of the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) on this point, including the point in their briefing that ‘Human rights education is a human right issue, for example the UK Government has agreed to Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which includes a commitment that “the education of the child shall be directed to...the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”’.<sup>21</sup>

We greatly admire programmes such as UNICEF’s Rights Respecting Schools,<sup>22</sup> and Hampshire County Council’s Rights, respect and responsibility,<sup>23</sup> which encourage pupils, staff and parents to put ‘the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school’s planning, policies, practice and ethos. A rights-respecting school not only teaches about children’s rights but also models rights and respect in all its relationships: between teachers / adults and pupils, between adults and between pupils.’ Evidence provided by both UNICEF and Hampshire County Council show the educational benefits of these programmes, and we would support reference to them in the citizenship curriculum as being things that schools should consider.

**In addition, the 2007 curriculum included frequent references to freedom, in particular ‘freedom of speech and diversity of views’. It is important that young people understand the importance of having a right to free speech, and we regret the removal of this reference.**

The need to teach about equalities and human rights is emphasised by issues around the teaching of citizenship education in ‘faith’ schools. We responded to the national curriculum review’s call for evidence by saying the following:<sup>24</sup>

We would not claim that ‘identity politics’ are wholly incompatible with democratic politics, but we do have concerns about religious schools and the need to ensure that the teaching of Citizenship education in these schools meets nationally agreed requirements.

The Government must ensure that schools that teach according to the tenets of the faith of the school promote gender equality and sexual orientation equality. This is both important to delivering a tolerant society where equality is respected by all children as well as properly equipping and preparing children for a life navigating the norms of a secular society where equality before the law is

<sup>21</sup> BIHR briefing, Human Rights Education in Schools: Time to make your voice heard: <http://www.bihhr.org.uk/sites/default/files/BIHRBrief%20HR%20Ed%20April2013.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/childrensrights/>

<sup>24</sup> *National Curriculum Review - Call for Evidence: Submission from the British Humanist Association (BHA)*, April 2011: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1bha-response-curriculum-review.pdf>

respected.

Recent rulings in UK Courts have underlined the fact that the UK is no longer a society where religious principles guide nor shape the secular law. Legislation, including the 2010 Equality Act, has enshrined the dignity of the individual to be protected from discrimination. In order to access work or provide a public service young people will be required to commit to equal opportunities. In order to achieve a coherent public sphere, it is vital that all children are provided with this opportunity to learn about their rights and responsibilities as a global citizen.

There is also evidence that strong religious identities are not those which best equip young people to participate in civil society. The Runnymede trust in an interim report on their large piece of qualitative research into 'faith' schools found that, in 'faith' schools, 'the goal of promoting a strong faith identity can sometimes be in tension with that of enabling community cohesion.'<sup>25</sup> Similar findings come from research by the Nestle Social Research Programme into young peoples civic action. The group found that young people who strongly associated their identity with their nation or religion were least likely to vote or to take part in demonstrations. These young people had the lowest rate of participation in recent community and political activities.<sup>26</sup>

Ofsted's 2006 report on Citizenship identified particular problems in 'faith' schools that states that: 'Especially in faith schools, (teachers) cited the ethical and moral values of their pupils as evidence of effective provision. In these schools, head teachers may well point to the demeanour of their pupils as good citizens in a general sense, and to all the parts of their school's work that contribute to this; but they have missed the point that National Curriculum citizenship is now a subject that is taught, learned, assessed and practised.'<sup>27</sup>

This judgment, finds an echo in the widely reported comments of David Bell when he was Chief Inspector of Schools who reported particular concerns for the teaching of Citizenship in independent 'faith' schools that did not teach children enough about a 'common heritage' and needed to do more to promote principles of mutual tolerance and social inclusion. Mr Bell reported that 'I worry that many young people are being educated in faith-based schools, with little appreciation of their wider responsibilities and obligations to British society.'<sup>28</sup>

Key Stage 4 citizenship says that 'Pupils should be taught about diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.' **This should also refer to non-religious identities.** We have commented on this to a greater extent in our response to question 9. **We also**

<sup>25</sup> Audrey Osler, 'Faith Schools and Community Cohesion: A Runnymede Trust Interim Report',

<sup>26</sup> Helen Haste 'My Voice. My Vote, My Community: a study of young people's civic action and inaction', (Nestle Social Research programme Report number four), Oct 2005.

<sup>27</sup> *Towards Consensus? Citizenship in Secondary Schools* (Ofsted 2006)

<sup>28</sup> Reported at (e.g.) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4180845.stm>

**regret the removal of any reference to inclusion and inclusivity.**

**English**

In the 'Purpose of study' section, it is stated that 'Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, spiritually and socially.' 'Morally' should be added to this list. As we have set out in our opening comments, it is important that the national curriculum includes moral education.

**History**

In twentieth century history, there is a section on 'society and social reform, including the abolition of capital punishment, the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality, and the Race Relations Act'. Added to this should be 'the rapid growth of non-religious beliefs and identities'.

As we set out in our response to question 9, a very large portion of the population, and a particularly large portion of young people – in fact, the majority – has no religion. As a consequence it is hugely important that young people are educated about non-religious beliefs, and this is currently very patchy in religious education. Given the scale of the change in UK religious demographics, it seems to us that history is also a place where this should be done – just as is included 'the Windrush generation, wider new Commonwealth immigration, and the arrival of East African Asians' – also very important but relatively smaller demographic changes.

**4 Does the content set out in the draft programmes of study represent a sufficiently ambitious level of challenge for pupils at each key stage?**

Sufficiently ambitious

Not sufficiently ambitious

Not sure

Comments: We have raised concerns in our response to question 3 that the sex education provided is inadequate – either in not making sufficient provision, or in making provision that comes much too late to meet young people’s needs.

**5 Do you have any comments on the proposed wording of the attainment targets?**

Comments: No comment.

**6 Do you agree that the draft programmes of study provide for effective progression between the key stages?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments: No comment.

**7 Do you agree that we should change the subject information and communication technology to computing, to reflect the content of the new programmes of study?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments: No comment.

**8 Does the new National Curriculum embody an expectation of higher standards for all children?**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments: No comment.

**9 What impact - either positive or negative - will our proposals have on the 'protected characteristic' groups?**

Comments: **Key Stage 4 citizenship says that 'Pupils should be taught about diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.' This should also refer to non-religious identities.**

The latest Census recorded 25% of the population of England and Wales as having no religion,<sup>29</sup> while the most recent *British Social Attitudes Survey* found that 46% of the public does not belong to a religion.<sup>30</sup> Focussing on young people specifically, the 2010 *British Social Attitudes Survey* (the most recent to segregate by age) records 65% of 18-24 year olds as not belonging to any religion.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the 2003 Citizenship Survey found 46% of 11-15 year olds not having a religion,<sup>32</sup> while a 2004 Department for Education report found 65% of 12-19 year olds are not religious.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'Religion in England and Wales 2011', 11 December 2011: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html>

<sup>30</sup> NatCen Social Research, 29th British Social Attitudes Survey: <http://bsa-29.natcen.ac.uk/>

<sup>31</sup> 28th British Social Attitudes Survey – see page 195: [http://ir2.flife.de/data/natcen-social-research/igb\\_html/index.php?bericht\\_id=1000001&index=&lang=ENG](http://ir2.flife.de/data/natcen-social-research/igb_html/index.php?bericht_id=1000001&index=&lang=ENG)

<sup>32</sup> Christine Farmer, '2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: Top-level findings from the Children's and Young People's Survey' (Home Office and Department for Education and Skills, 2005), p. 37: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452490.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Alison Park, Miranda Phillips and Mark Johnson, 'Young People in Britain: The Attitudes and Experiences of 12 to 19 Year Olds' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004), pp. 10-11: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR564.pdf.pdf>

In other words, a very large portion of the population, and a majority of young people, has no religion. To exclude the identities of those people would be to put them at a disadvantage.

We similarly responded to question 3, arguing that twentieth century history should include the huge growth in non-religious beliefs and identities.

We also support the Sex Education Forum's response to this question, about the importance of ensuring that all sex education in science is inclusive of LGBT pupils – for example by covering IVF, and ensuring that any discussion of gender includes intersex and transgender identities.

**10 To what extent will the new National Curriculum make clear to parents what their children should be learning at each stage of their education?**

Comments: Parents have a strong role to play in supporting sex education. However, this should not extend to parents being able to deny their children the right to aspects of sex education, or any other aspect of the curriculum.

**11 What key factors will affect schools' ability to implement the new National Curriculum successfully from September 2014?**

Comments: No comment.

**12 Who is best placed to support schools and/or develop resources that schools will need to teach the new National Curriculum?**

Comments: With respect to sex education, we believe the Government needs to look to the PSHE Association, Sex Education Forum, and leading sexual health charities such as FPA, Brook and their project Education For Choice, all of whom the Government has worked in partnership with in the past.

Schools should look to pupils and respond to their demands and needs in this area. Parents also have a strong role to play in supporting sex education. However, this should not extend to parents being able to deny their children the right to aspects of sex education.

**13 Do you agree that we should amend the legislation to disapply the National Curriculum programmes of study, attainment targets and statutory assessment arrangements, as set out in section 12 of the consultation document?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments: No comment.

**14 Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the proposals in this consultation?**

Comments: As per our response to question 1, we have included some recent examples of individuals who got in touch with us to express concern about the teaching of creationism in maintained schools (all gave us permission to share these):

*1. I am writing to you to ask for your assistance. My 9 year old son currently attends a school in Surrey. It's a wonderful little school and by and large, we are delighted our children have been educated there.*

*I have been aware that the school teaches RE to the children and that most main religions are taught and priority is given to Christianity.*

*Over the last few years Bible Explorer have been invited to the class to teach Christianity to the children. As a non-religious person with atheist leanings I was happy for my child to learn the tenets of all religions - it wasn't anything I was too concerned about.*

*However, my son comes home suggesting that Creationism is being pushed - to such an extent that I don't believe Christianity is not being taught but preaching and indoctrination is taking place. I have obviously raised my concerns with the teachers and their reassurance hasn't put my mind at rest. This term they offered to take my son out of the lessons which we were happy with.*

**2.** *My son attends a C of E primary school... My husband and I are atheists. We knew that our son would encounter C of E teachings in his school and although in an ideal world we would rather that didn't happen, we were willing to accept it, assuming it would be relatively low-key, especially in a multi-cultural school.*

...

*My son has come home talking of creationism and when asked, says that there was no counterbalancing view given.*

...

*I have checked and double-checked and he says that the head is "always going on about" creationism. I asked if they are told about evolution (and explained what this is) and he was sure they have not been yet. I am not at all surprised.*

**3.** *To summarise, my daughter (5) has been taught creationism within RE and within collective worship within an non faith state school (England). Both instances occurred within the same week.*

*I met with the RE teacher and she said that she had not taught creationism, but a 'story'. At no point did she ever acknowledge that it might be a legitimate problem that my daughter had developed creationist beliefs within the school environment. Her answers to my questions were roughly as follows. She stated the need to respect that creationism was the belief of some children. She indicated that my daughter may have picked it up in assembly and as well as within the classroom. Further, she said that she believed my daughter was too young to learn about evolution, but that creationism could be taught this as a 'nature' story.*

...

*We were also concerned that she showed no concern at all that her teaching had resulted in us having a five year old creationist (whether or not it was her intention)!*

**4.** *I work in an ordinary state run infant school. I 'cover' for teachers while they plan lessons, attend courses or are sick. Over the past few years I have noticed that the creation story is taught as fact.*

*Lessons plans require me to say 'Christians believe that God created the world in six days', and I was expected to lead the children in a prayer 'Thank you God for making the world in six days'.*

*I have mentioned this to both the Headteacher and Assistant Head but, judging from this term's coverage of the creation story, nothing has changed.*

*I don't want to make myself unpopular with the senior staff, but I'm uncomfortable doing nothing about it. Have you any suggestions please?*

...

*the school is not a faith school, it's an ordinary state run community school.*

*The headteacher began her assembly with 'Christians believe that God created the world in 6 days', and the children were required to thank God for making the world in 6 days in their prayer.*

**15 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand, complete etc.)**

Comments: It wasn't entirely clear where to respond with comments about section 2/page 5 of the framework document. We responded in question 1, but think this was more intended for responses about section 3.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

E-mail address for acknowledgement: \_\_\_\_\_

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 16 April 2013

Send by post to:

Consultation Unit,  
Area 1c,  
Castle View House,  
East Lane,  
Runcorn,  
Cheshire,  
WA7 2GJ.

Send by e-mail to: [NationalCurriculum.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:NationalCurriculum.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)