QCA's Secondary Curriculum Review Consultation
Submission from Childnet International

OVERVIEW OF SUBMISSION

Childnet International[1] welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the QCA Secondary Curriculum Review consultation. Our primary contribution to this review is in helping the QCA review how the planned revised programme of study can include a greater recognition of the importance of ICT safeguarding issues, as well as a stronger commitment to the effective promotion of E-safety education in general.

Our experience at Childnet has revealed to us the vital importance of responding appropriately to the needs and interests of children and young people who are growing up using powerful digital tools and social software. However, there remains an alarming gap, with many schools not adequately equipped to help students understand how to use these tools responsibly and safely (especially the tools they use outside of the classroom). Indeed a recent national study highlighted that many students within the Key Stage 3 & 4 group, reported having received no lessons at all on using the internet in schools[2].

We would very much like to convey our appreciation of the thoughtfulness and forward thinking that has clearly gone into producing the proposed Curriculum Review. While we recognize that the QCA 's proposals may raise concerns with regard to resourcing and staff professional development, we strongly believe that the proposed ICT curriculum represents a significant and necessary improvements to the educational landscape.

However, whilst Childnet welcomes the revised curriculum's emphasis on the need to promote the use of technology for responsible social engagement across the curriculum, we believe that the review should include stronger reference to the need to equip students with the necessary skills to understand and prevent the risks associated with the internet and digital communication. This includes the importance of critical evaluation and information skills, the significance of keeping personal information secure, understanding the impact and consequences of antisocial online behaviour(including cyberbullying), and the issues relating to ownership, copyright, plagiarism, and privacy of information.

Every Child Matters highlights the importance of keeping children safe, at a time when the explosion of internet and mobile technologies means that children are now vulnerable from far greater exposure to inappropriate Content, Contact and Commercialism[3]. It is vital that any review of the Curriculum includes greater reference to the new "life skills" of digital literacy and e-safety.

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1 Childnet International is a non-profit organisation set up in 1995 with the mission to work with others to "help make the Internet a great and safe place for children" See www.childnet-int.org for full details of Childnet's work including links to its award-winning education and awareness programmes for young people, parents and teachers.
2 UK Children Go Online research study www.children-go-online.net which also found that 38% of pupils aged 9-19 trust most of the information on the internet.
3 Childnet's 3 Cs' is a helpful way to classify the various risks to children online.

This assertion in this submission is made based on Childnet's considerable experience of:

- Developing strategic education programmes in partnership with a wide range of Government bodies in the UK including; The DfES[4] , BECTA[5] , The Home Office and including a recent research project looking at E-Safety education in initial teacher Training which Childnet conducted for the TDA with support from Microsoft.
- The work we have done with companies in the Internet and Mobile industries in reviewing e-safety advice to their customers and mobilising their staff to support schools education programmes[6].
- The valuable grass-roots experience we have gained in working directly with children and young people, parents and teachers in schools[7] over many years and the production of ground-breaking education resources for Key Stage 3 and 4. This has shown us how it is possible to integrate the issue of e-safety and media literacy into the ICT, Citizenship and PSHE curriculum[8].

We are keen to share our experiences and help ensure that the Curriculum Review makes stronger reference to this issue and that the QCA provides teachers and students with a world class framework that recognises the new requirements of a curriculum fit for global citizens and learners.

For the purposes of this submission we have restricted our comments in this review to focus primarily on three main areas of:

1. Organising the curriculum, in particular "personalising" and inclusion
2. Functional skills in the revised programme of study for ICT at level 1 and 2,
3. The programme of study for ICT at key stage 3 and 4.

Additionally, we include a summary of a recent research programme which Childnet undertook for the **Training and Development Agency for Schools** (TDA) with support from Microsoft which assessed how and where the subject of E-Safety could be integrated in initial teacher training. This 4 month project involved 400 teacher trainees and concluded that "**E-safety should be embedded within the teaching standards requirements to meet the statutory regulation**". A summary of this research is included here along with a short note on the current statutory regulations.

1) PERSONALISING THE CURRICULUM: INCLUSION

Childnet is delighted to see attention given to the potential flexibility of curriculum delivery ("…there is no requirement to deliver the programmes of study through discrete subject slots and there are no statutory regulations about how much time ought to be spent on different areas of the curriculum') within the context of organizing the curriculum. This is particularly relevant to the role of ICT for learners, teachers and schools. However, we would like to see digital literacy and e-safety issues viewed as central to supporting engagement and achievement across the whole curriculum.

While we are in agreement with the QCA's definition of an inclusive curriculum, we would also urge the recognition of personalisation as not just a type of provision that can be supported and 'built in' to the curriculum, but also as an opportunity to support learner lead decisions about tools, processes, practices and activities. A curriculum that supports learners to make and justify independent, responsible evaluations of appropriate tools and processes safely and responsibly, should also value the facilitation of active, learner-led personalisation. We would like to see emphasis on exploring the opportunities for learner-selected tools made in the curriculum review, in addition to the focus on the provision and transmission of options.

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4 Childnet has just completed the research and consultation for the DfES on producing guidance for schools on Cyberbullying. Childnet has also produced for the DfES the 'Know IT All for Parents' CD-ROM which is being made available free of charge to all schools
5 Becta are increasingly encouraging schools to have an e-safety officer and embed e-safety into the curriculum, and the need to address the training of teachers in e-safety is becoming increasingly important. Childnet has been a member of the Safe Use of ICT in Education Steering Group for many years.
6 Childnet has worked hard with a number of companies including Microsoft and 02 to deliver education messages both to their customers and students – for example see the 'Getting to know IT ALL' schools outreach pilot programme which in 2006 reached appox 50,000 pupils and was formally evaluated with funding from OFCOM – see http://www.childnet-int.org/kia/press.aspx (20th April 2006 news article).
7 See Childnet's Kidsmart website – www.kidsmart.org.uk and also the Activity days programme at:
http://www.kidsmart.org.uk/teachers/activitydays.aspx

8 See Childnet's Jenny's Story film which was produced with the Police in 2005 and has been used in schools **www.childnet-int.org/jenny**

The Inclusion section makes several references to 'learning styles'. We would caution against using this phrase. Learning style systems may be perceived as an over simplification of the fluid learning processes and preferences of individual learners, which are not usefully reduced to visual, auditory, text-based and kinesthetic models. We would suggest that references to 'learning styles' be changed to 'preferred ways of learning'. The emphasis should be on varied and diverse learning and teaching methods that appeal to and include all, rather than on particular, dominant styles matched to individual students.

In that current research indicates that as a many as 22% of young people report having been a target of cyberbullying[9] , we would strongly urge that specific reference to cyberbullying be included in the document where "all forms of bullying and harassment, including racial harassment" are mentioned. This supports the principles of the safe and responsible social use of ICT.

2) FUNCTIONAL SKILLS IN THE REVISED PROGRAMME OF STUDY FOR ICT LEVEL 1 AND 2

Childnet welcomes the characterization of level 1 & 2 functional skills in ICT as underpinned by and supporting the effective, responsible and safe use of ICT. However, we would very much like to see highlighted in the amendment of the opening paragraph to a description of functional skills in ICT as developing "... the ability to use ICT responsibly and safely to find, select and communicate information." We support the recognition of digital literacy as a competency that can facilitate the provision of inclusive, engaging and anti-discriminatory learning, and can enable young people to make a "positive contribution in the communities in which they live and work".

Intellectual property and plagiarism are issues mentioned within the explanatory notes for the curriculum concepts for ICT. However, we would expect to see key information skills - for example, citation and the appropriate reuse of data – either alongside the core competencies of locating and evaluating material or within the functional skill standard 'develop, presents and communicate information'.

3) PROGRAMME OF STUDY FOR ICT KEY STAGE 3 AND 4

Childnet supports the Curriculum aims for ICT Key stage 3 and 4, and believes that the Key concepts are comprehensive and appropriate.

Curriculum aims
We very much support the over arching aims of the revised curriculum:
"Learning and undertaking activities in information and communication technology (ICT) contribute to achievement of the curriculum aims for all young people to become: Successful learners, who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society."

The importance of ICT
We agree with the identification of the importance of ICT outlined in the revised curriculum:
"The increasing use of technology in all aspects of society makes confident, creative and productive use of ICT an essential skill for life. ICT capability encompasses not only the mastery of technical skills and techniques, but also the understanding to apply these skills purposefully in learning, everyday life and employment. ICT capability is fundamental to participation and engagement in modern society."
We would also like to see attention being drawn to the rapid development that characterizes ICT. Although the curriculum needs to support pupils in gaining specific skills and techniques, it additionally needs to prepare them to be able to continually adapt to new processes and tools. The curriculum also needs to equip learners to use ICT responsibly and safely and this needs to be explicit in this section of the importance of ICT.

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9 Research carried out for the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA), found that 22% of 11-16 year-olds had been a victim of cyberbullying (P. Smith, J. Mahdavi et al 2006).

KEY CONCEPTS

Communication and collaboration:
We particularly welcome the recognition of the potential educational value of the current generation of social software tools (blogs, wikis, collaborative software) that are referred to in the Key Concept explanatory notes.

We believe that the global aspect of communication and knowledge creation is an important one within the ICT curriculum, and one that additionally creates opportunities for delivery across other areas of the curriculum, particularly with regard to citizenship. However, ICT is extremely effective and important for personal social participation, as well as at local and national levels. All of these aspects of ICT should be considered. E-safety issues, particularly in relation to Cyberbullying and the responsible use of technologies are pertinent at all of these levels.

We welcome the definition of communication and collaboration as :
"Communicating with real and authentic audiences, for example by using blogs, wikis, collaborative software and collaborative websites."

This emphasis recognizes how learners are increasingly engaging with technologies and requires the curriculum to seriously address the benefits and prepare students for risks associated with new forms of public communication and content creation.

KEY PROCESSES

Developing ideas:
Examples to plan, test and modify include "… use of Logo, use of HTML to create web pages, JavaScript and control programs."

We would like to see this section reflect new skills and practices at the appropriate skills level in addition to those associated with traditional development and programming. For example, synthesizing and customizing web feeds, services and pages.

Communicating Information:
"When using digital communication, pupils should develop an understanding of safe practices and follow them. For example they should be cautious about sharing personal information and viewing digital images. They should also recognise the need to show respect towards others."

We are delighted that the proposed curriculum recognizes the key role of e-safety. However in this section we would wish to reference to the importance of students being careful about sharing personal information, and sharing or uploading files (images or videos). It is also important to include here the need for students to show respect towards others by not passing on or uploading personal data and content which is protected by copyright

Childnet very much looks forward to contributing to the support and development resourcing in e-safety and digital literacy which will be necessary to prepare and equip teaching staff to support their students in these areas.

Evaluating:
"Pupils should be able to: review, modify and evaluate work as it progresses, reflecting critically and using feedback reflect on their own and others' uses of ICT to help them develop and improve their ideas and the quality of their work reflect on what they have learnt and use these insights to improve future work."

Additionally, pupils should be able to evaluate specific tools and applications, in order to select the most appropriate and be encouraged to evaluate the reliability of information online. Any evaluation process should also include an appreciation of e-safety issues for example does this website, image, posting video etc pose a risk to the subject or person posting or reading the content.

Software applications:
"For example word-processing, spreadsheet, graphics, browser, email."

This should refer to social/participatory software as well as more traditional applications.

Safe working practices:
"For example adjust seating and lighting, avoid hazards, take breaks, arrangement of hardware and cables, wrist rests and other devices."

The use of safe in this context may make the programmes previous use of the word safe confused. There needs to be a clear distinction made between health and safety issues and responsible use and e-safety issues.

The impact of ICT:
Childnet welcomes the examples of impacts given:

"This could include issues relating to copyright, plagiarism and effects on employment and local communities. Pupils could also consider the causes and implications of unequal access to ICT locally, nationally and globally."

We would also suggest that key additional impacts that could be addressed within this process include Cyberbullying, data protection, intellectual copyright, breach of privacy, legal considerations and the role of consumerism and advertising online, including viral marketing.

Justify the choice of ICT tools:
"For example when choosing between software packages students should be able to justify their choices using criteria such as efficiency, ease of use, availability and fitness for purpose."

Evaluation criteria could usefully include accessibility issues, the use of commercial and open source tools, as well as licensing issues and restrictions.

Safely, responsibly and securely:
"When using digital communication, students should develop an understanding of safe practices and follow them. For example, they should be cautious about sharing personal information and viewing digital images. They should also recognise the need to show respect towards others by: not divulging personal data complying with data protection regulations. They should know about systems that enable safety, eg encryption, firewalls, backups, secure sites for financial transactions."

The document would benefit from greater clarity between data security and e-safety issues. While there is some overlap between these (i.e. not sharing passwords), we would expect them to be approached as complimentary rather than equivalent processes.

We are disappointed at the lack of attention given within PHSEE – Economic and Personal Well being at Key Stages 3 and 4. While the Internet is recognized as a research tool, key areas related to ICT which provide excellent cross-curricula opportunities – for example digital presence and identity, cyber bullying, gender and ICT, are not explored.

Similarly, the proposed curriculum aims for Citizenship at key stage 3 and 4 characterise ICT as a source of media information, rather than as an important tool for facilitating participation and political engagement. We strongly urge the QCA to review how ICT can more effectively be incorporated into the other areas of the proposed curriculum, in such a way that supports responsible ICT capability as "fundamental to participation and engagement in modern society".

E-SAFETY IN INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

In January 2007 with funding from Microsoft and the 'Training and Development Agency for Schools' Childnet ran an evaluation of a number of e-safety resources for Key Stage 3 &4 in four Initial teacher training institutions. The resources were tested on 400 trainee teachers to establish the needs of trainee teachers in relation to e-safety education.

Following the expert evaluation of a number of e-safety resources; development of an online evaluation form; presenting e-safety sessions to 400 trainee teachers; presenting further resources online and capturing over 73,000 words of comments; recommendations are made regarding the support for e-safety provision in initial teacher education (ITE).

The academics made the following key recommendation:

E-safety should be embedded within the teaching standards requirements to meet the statutory regulation and there are a number of models of implementing the training including face-to-face which show a higher uptake and are more highly valued by trainees. An online portal should be developed with resources, information and advice, specifically to meet the needs of trainee teachers and their tutors.

Statutory requirements:
The teaching standards direct trainers in what and how they should provide for recruitment, training and assessment of teachers. The standards make explicit the skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes expected of trainees. They are under review and the new standards have yet to be authorised (March 2007). Connections with the "new" standards are implicit in that they are underpinned by the five key outcomes for children and young people identified in The Every Child Matters agenda and the six areas of the common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce (DfES, 2004a). The key standard that links with this project concerns 'Professional Knowledge and Understanding; Health and well-being', which challenges trainees to;

"Be aware of current legal requirements, national policies and guidance on the safeguarding and promotion of the well-being of children and young people.

(Plus) know how to identify and support children and young people whose progress, development or well-being is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances, and when to refer them to colleagues for specialist support." (DfES, 2007a: Q21)

In addition, as part of their Professional Skills competencies they are expected to use e-learning within a safe environment. Trainees have to demonstrate that they are meeting the teaching Standards by the end of the training and the content of training develops from year to year to include up-to-date initiatives. ICT-based training is central to this and in recent years, has been broadened considerably by the growth of the internet and in particular, on-line discussion and communication. Central to the developments in internet accessibility at home and in school is the issue of e-safety and the need to establish what is acceptable internet behaviour.

Every Child Matters (ECM) supports the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19 with the aim that very child should: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being (DfES, 2004b). E-safety is an important aspect of staying safe and teaching pupils how to: understand the technology; protect themselves; take care of others and report incidents, should be part of ECM teacher education.

The Personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum has many requirements that are relevant to e-safety. They include:

"... the ability to recognise and manage risk and make safer choices, to recognise when pressure from others threatens their personal safety and well-being, and to develop effective ways of resisting pressures; knowing when and where to get help; and about the nature of friendship and how to make and keep friends".

In the breadth of study, there is a requirement that pupils "consider social and moral dilemmas" (QCA, 1999: 188-194). The e-safety materials examined can be used to give a useful real-life context within which to explore these areas.

Citizenship is a relatively new subject of the National Curriculum (QCA, 1999: 182-186) and new as a specific secondary teacher-training route. Many schools still do not teach Citizenship as a discrete subject at key stage 3 and rely on it being taught through other subjects such as PSHE. This complements the strong cross-curricular element of e-safety and its potential integration into all trainees' citizenship curriculum. Security and personal well being are part of the subject knowledge element of all citizenship training courses and the development of e-safety issues through the use of ICT enables trainees to develop their subject knowledge through the e-safety/ICT route. Discussions with two subject leaders suggest that a good model would be for trainees to use one of the on-line resources whilst on placement, following its delivery in the training centre.

None of the ICT across the curriculum (ICTAC) materials published in 2004, which promote a renewed focus on the teaching of ICT skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes in other subject areas, refers to e-safety (DfES, 2004). Nor do they provide e-safety advice for teachers or support for students.

The Framework for teaching ICT capability (DfES, 2002a) and the sample teaching units (STUs), make no direct reference to being cautious online or draw attention to e-safety issues. The Unit 8 Information, Reliability, Validity and Bias (DfES, 2002b) would be an opportunity to raise issues because teachers will be talking about the motivations of people when they place materials on the worldwide web or use the internet to communicate.

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