

Aims of the 14-19 curriculum

“matching the best anywhere” (DfES, 2007a)

The DfES is committed to transforming the 14-19 curriculum over the coming decade with a strategy involving curriculum, assessment, provision and resourcing. This will be done through fostering partnerships between a range of agencies including local authorities, the Learning and Skills Council, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. As the DfES (2007a) puts it “Success depends most of all on local partners – the job of Government is to get behind them”.

Reform of the current system is needed because pupils can easily choose options that ultimately become dead-ends which offer little in the way of further progression or opportunity and which do not encourage participation in education beyond 16.. The need is to provide a more coherent system as recognised in the Green Paper *14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards* (DfES, 2002a), which recommended a single 14-19 phase. The *14-19: Opportunity and Excellence* report (DfES, 2003) established a clear government policy that is crystallised in the more recent White Paper *14-19: Education and Skills* (DfES, 2005). The government’s ambitions for increasing the number of young people continuing their education beyond 16 has made the need for reform even more pressing.

The 14-19 Working Group, headed by Mike Tomlinson, set out proposals for a long-term structural reform of 14-19 education and training systems that will be fully inclusive, encouraging all learners – whatever their ability – to achieve their full potential.

The strategy is complemented by the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2007b) response to The Children’s Act. It does this by ensuring all young people have opportunities to learn in ways that motivate and engage them with the aim of ensuring individual success in life.

Young people with no qualifications are at a particular disadvantage in the labour market. It is much harder for them to ensure their economic well-being. The proportion of 16-17 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET) has steadily increased over the last couple of years.

“Being NEET is a major predictor of later unemployment, low incomes, teenage motherhood, depression and poor physical health.” (DfES, 2005b)

In summary, the 14-19 agenda developed by the government reports is based around:

- ◆ a new specialist system;
- ◆ built on collaboration;
- ◆ a strong focus on teaching and personalised learning;
- ◆ excellent leadership teams;
- ◆ reform of the school workforce; and
- ◆ heavy investment in ICT and school buildings through the Building Schools for the Future programme (DfES, 2004).

The reforms have three main elements (DfES, 2007a):

- ◆ raising attainment now;
- ◆ designing new curriculum and qualifications; and
- ◆ delivering on the ground.