

# The Curriculum and Assessment Review

Professor Nic Beech  
Curriculum and Assessment Review Panel Member  
Vice-Chancellor, University of Salford

**Curriculum and  
Assessment  
Review**

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# Background

- In July 2024, the government announced the formation of an independently-led Curriculum and Assessment Review, to undertake a review of the current national curriculum and statutory assessment system in England.
- Spanning Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 and 16-19 education, the Review is looking closely at the key challenges to attainment for young people, and the barriers which hold them back from the opportunities and life chances they deserve – in particular, those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, or who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- The Review is being informed by research evidence, data and a wealth of perspectives from experts, stakeholders and the public.
- Our Interim Report (published 18.3.25) sets out the findings of the Review to date and plans for the next phase of the Review. The final report will be published in Autumn 2025.

# The panel



**Professor Becky Francis CBE: Chair**

Previously Chief Executive Officer of the Education Endowment Foundation



**Lisa O'Loughlin**

Principal and CEO of the Nelson and Colne College Group



**Dr Vanessa Ogden CBE**

CEO of the Mulberry Schools Trust



**Funmilola Stewart**

Trust Leader for Anti-Racism and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across Dixons MAT



**Gary Aubin**

Specialist Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) consultant



**Cassie Buchanan OBE**

CEO of the Charter Schools Education Trust in South-East London



**Sir Ian Bauckham CBE: Observer**

Interim Chief Regulator at Ofqual, Chair of Oak National Academy



**Professor Zongyi Deng**

Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy at IOE – Faculty of Education and Society, University College London.



**Nic Beech**

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Salford



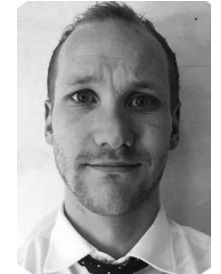
**Professor Jo-Anne Baird**

Director of the Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment



**John Laramy CBE**

Principal and Chief Executive of Exeter College



**Jon Hutchinson**

Director of Curriculum and Teacher Development at the Reach Foundation

# Principles of the review

- **Evidence and Data Informed:** Decisions will be based on solid evidence, avoiding myths and unproven practices.
- **Evolution, Not Revolution:** Building on existing strengths and successes without unnecessary changes.
- **Aware of Trade-offs:** Considering practical implementation and avoiding extra workload for education staff.
- **Focused on Key Issues:** Addressing significant curriculum and assessment issues without destabilising the system.
- **High-Quality Curriculum:** Committing to a comprehensive curriculum for all students up to age 16.
- **Removing Barriers:** Ensuring access to quality education and pathways for all students.
- **Consultative Approach:** Engaging with education professionals, experts, parents, students, and stakeholders.

# Research and data

- We polled over 2,000 young people who had just completed their KS4 and 16 to 19 exams, and their parents; and supplemented this with polling undertaken by Parentkind, which surveyed over 5,000 parents across the UK.
- We received over 7,000 responses to the Call for Evidence with a variety of respondent types including teachers, tutors, lecturers, parents, carers, leaders, researchers, experts, students, members of the public, local authorities and employers.
- We have undertaken public consultation events across the country, complemented by focus groups and roundtables with education professionals, young people and other stakeholders.
- We also collected a wide range of research and statistical evidence, including analysis of learner data from the National Pupil Database and Longitudinal Education Outcomes data, as well as a wide range of education research and published statistical evidence.

# Key findings

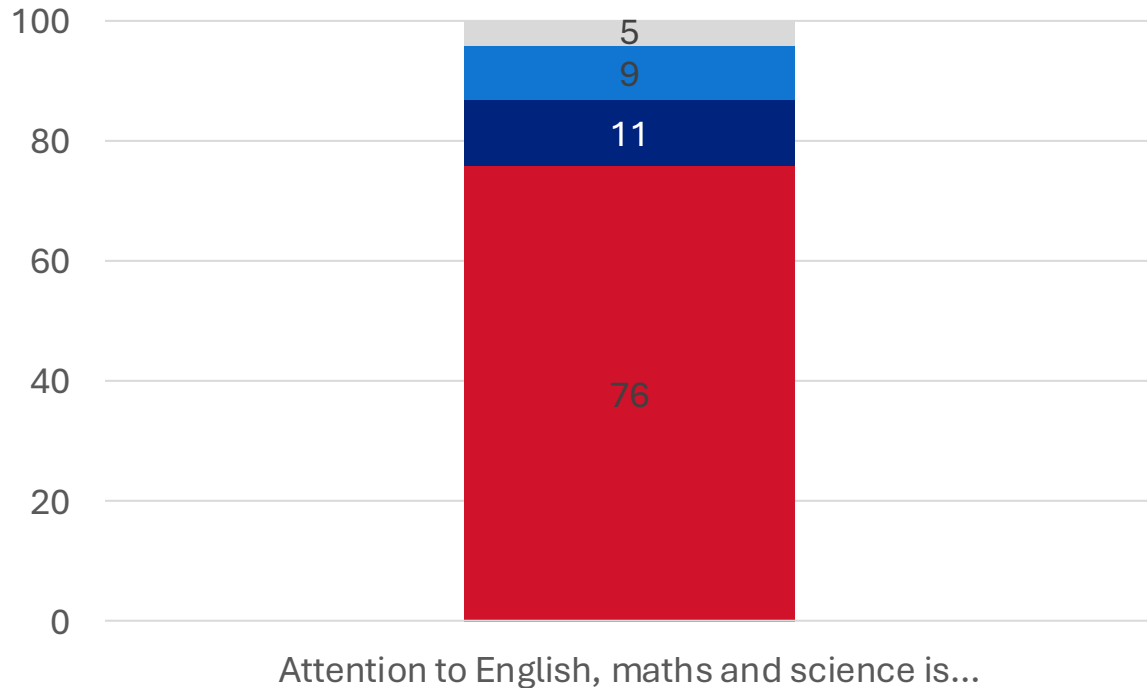
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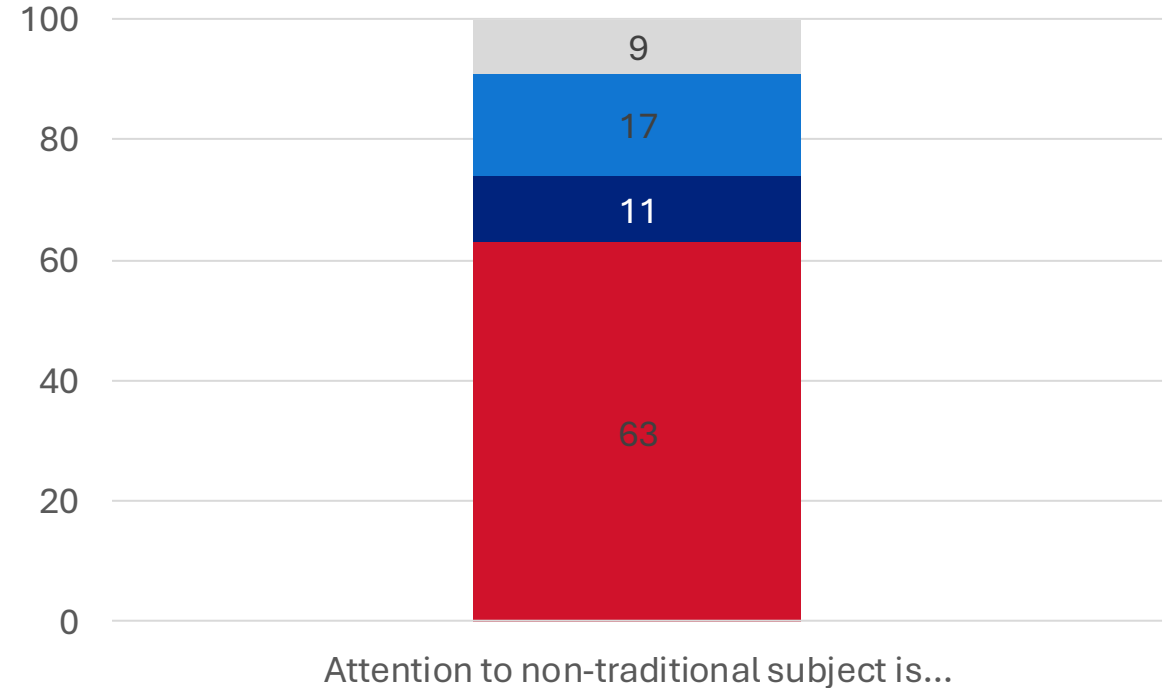


# Findings from the National Parent Survey (2024)

Attention to English, maths and science is...



Attention to non-traditional subjects (eg/. drama, music) is...



■ About right ■ Too much ■ Too little ■ Don't know

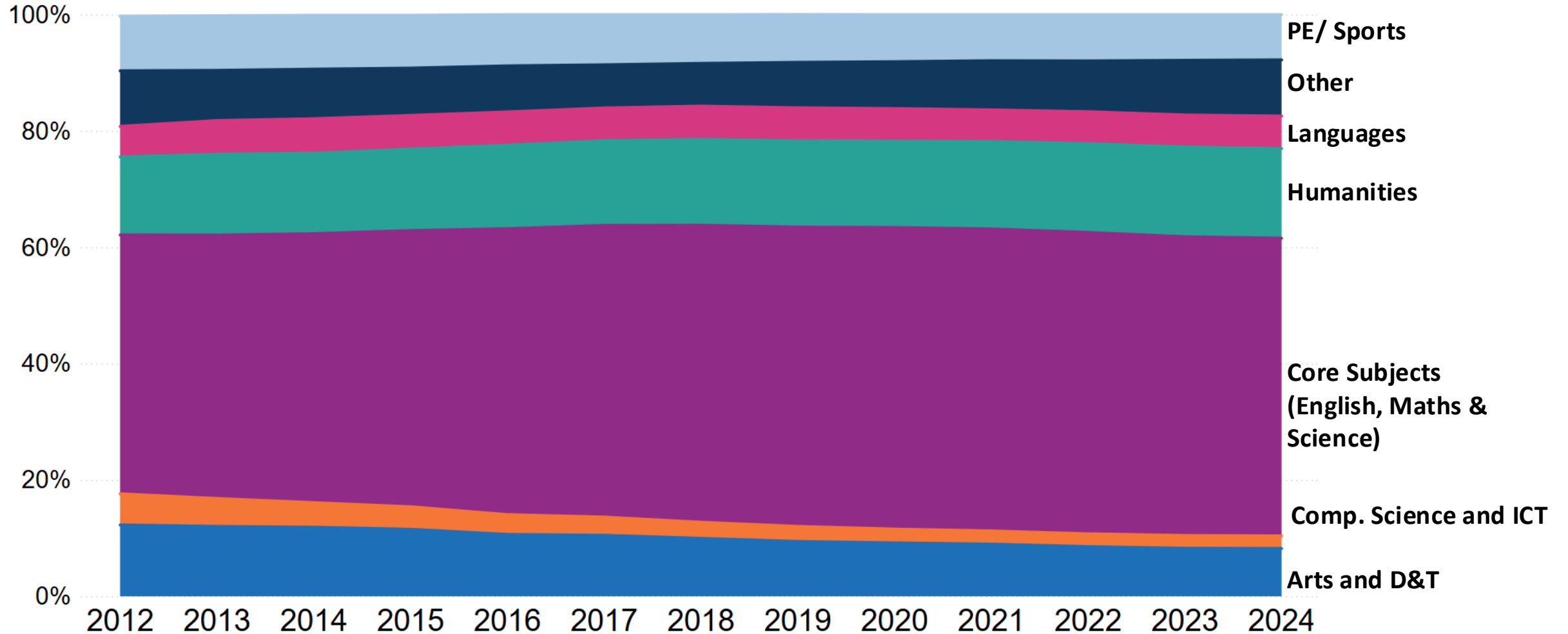
■ About right ■ Too much ■ Too little ■ Don't know

# Four areas needing attention

High standards needs to mean high standards for all.

Curriculum shape and the content of particular subjects need attention

# Curriculum shape: Teaching time by subject groups, as proportion of total teaching time at KS4



# Four areas needing attention

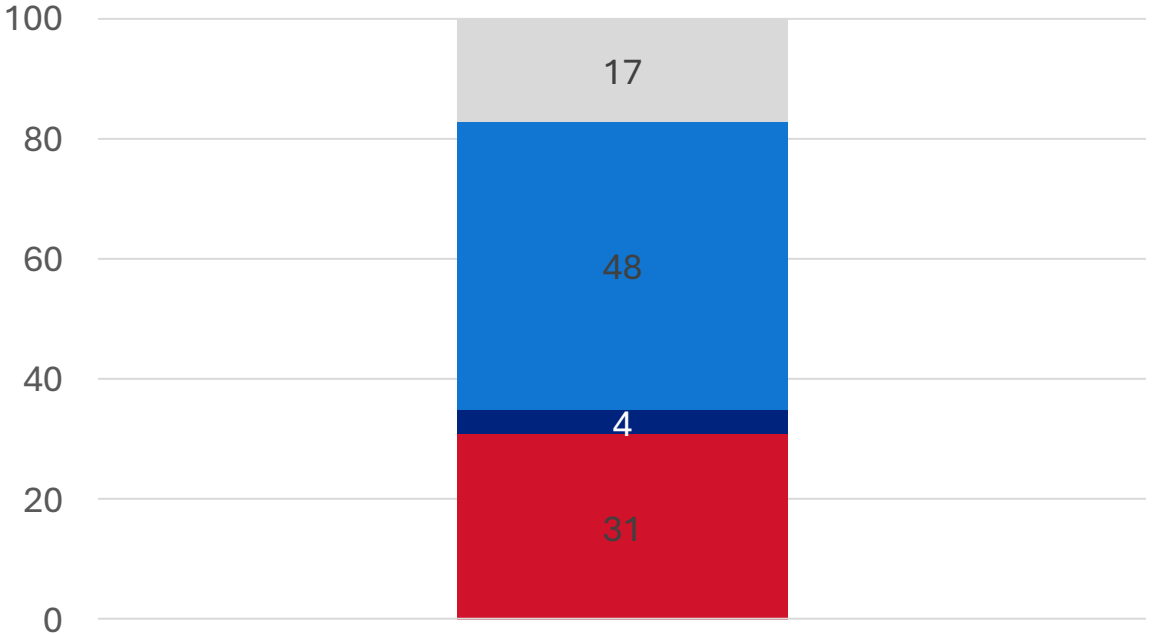
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The curriculum must be fit for the future

# Findings from polling students and parents

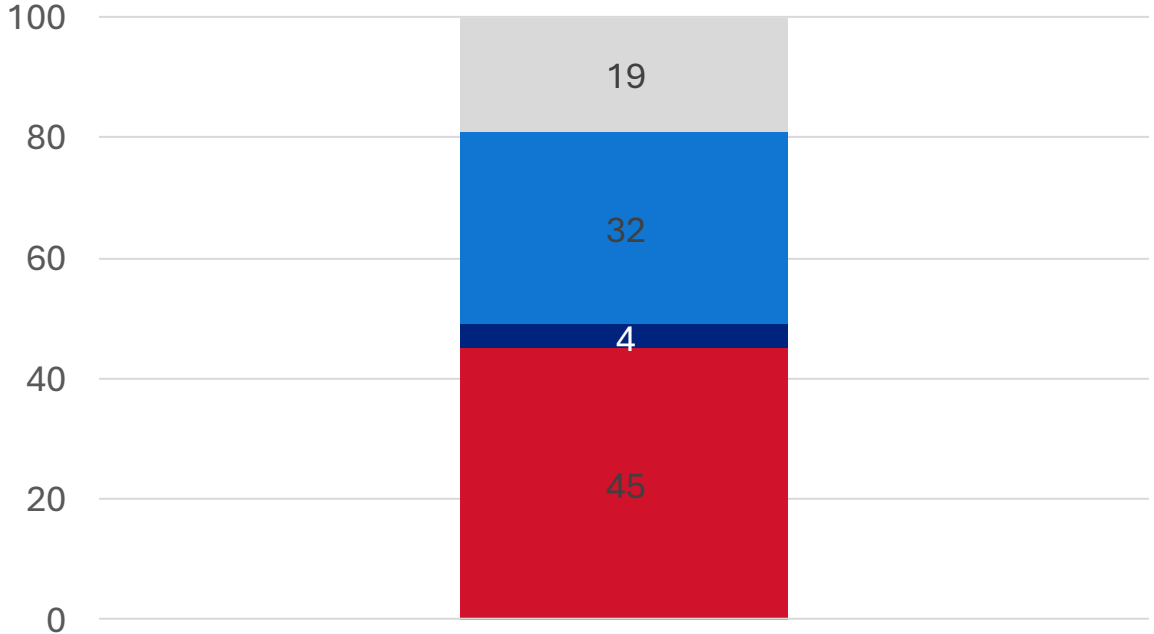
Attention to financial management is...



Attention to financial management is...

■ About right ■ Too much ■ Too little ■ Don't know

Attention to preparation for the job market is...



Attention to preparation for the job market

■ About right ■ Too much ■ Too little ■ Don't know

# Four areas needing attention

High standards needs to mean high standards for all.

Curriculum shape and the content of particular subjects need attention

The curriculum must be fit for the future

Post-16 needs to deliver secure pathways – especially for those young people not taking three A Levels or a T Level.

# Areas of interest – and miscommunication!



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# Challenging the headlines!

## Assessment

The Review will not:

- Axe GCSEs
- Slash exams
- It *will* focus on volume, and specifically *time*.

## Performance Measures

The Review will not:

- Cut academic subjects
- It *will* look at how best to facilitate greater choice while not compromising breadth

## Curriculum content

The Review will not:

- Dumb down content, or infuse with ‘issues’ or campaigns.
- It *will* ensure that every young person can see themselves in the curriculum, and that it challenges discrimination and extends horizons

# Questions arising

- Can exams be made more inclusive for young people with SEND, while maintaining rigor?
- Can we comb out unnecessary content, especially in overcrowded subject areas? What are the implications (e.g. for A Levels etc)?
- How can we best incentivise a balance between subject breadth and choice in qualification portfolios?
- To what extent can greater diversity (ethnicity, social class, gender, dis/ability, sexuality) be represented in the curriculum and qualification content and materials?

# What next?

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# Next phase of work

The Review will publish its final report in autumn 2025. In the meantime, we will:

- Consider concerns that have been raised across subjects about the specificity, relevance, volume and diversity of content.
- Explore level 3 pathways, particularly considering how best to support learners who do not study A levels or T Levels.
- Consider how best to ensure learners who did not achieve the required standard in English and maths at GCSE are best supported to do so by age 18.
- Conduct further analysis of assessment at key stages 1 to 4 and consider any necessary improvements.

# Thank you