



TransformED

Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028
Short Guides for Schools

Guide 8: Implementation and support





Purpose of this guide

This guide outlines the proposed implementation journey for the Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028 and the support that schools can expect throughout the reform process.

Curriculum reform on this scale cannot happen overnight. Meaningful and sustainable change requires time, professional learning, leadership and careful planning. For this reason, implementation is planned as a long-term process that prioritises capacity building and before statutory requirements are introduced. Schools are, therefore, encouraged to view the next two academic years as an opportunity to develop understanding, strengthen curriculum thinking and engage fully with the emerging reforms.

A phased process

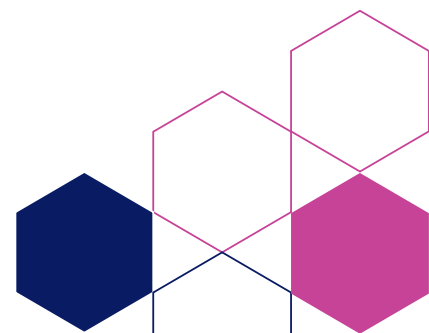
The Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028 will be introduced through a phased programme of implementation. This reflects international evidence that successful curriculum reform depends upon developing shared understanding and professional expertise before significant changes reach the classroom.

Phase 1. September 2026 – June 2028: preparation and capacity building.

During this period, schools will become familiar with the curriculum framework, subject entitlements and the principles underpinning curriculum reform. Professional learning opportunities will support teachers and leaders in developing a deeper understanding of curriculum design, progression and the evidence that informed the new framework. Schools may also begin reviewing their existing curriculum provision and identifying areas where future development will be required.

Phase 2. September 2028 – June 2031: three-year statutory phased roll-out.

From September 2028, the curriculum will enter a phased statutory roll-out. Rather than introducing changes across all year groups simultaneously implementation will be gradual. This measured approach is intended to support effective transition, minimise disruption and provide opportunities for refinement as implementation progresses. Schools will continue to receive guidance, resources and professional learning throughout this period.

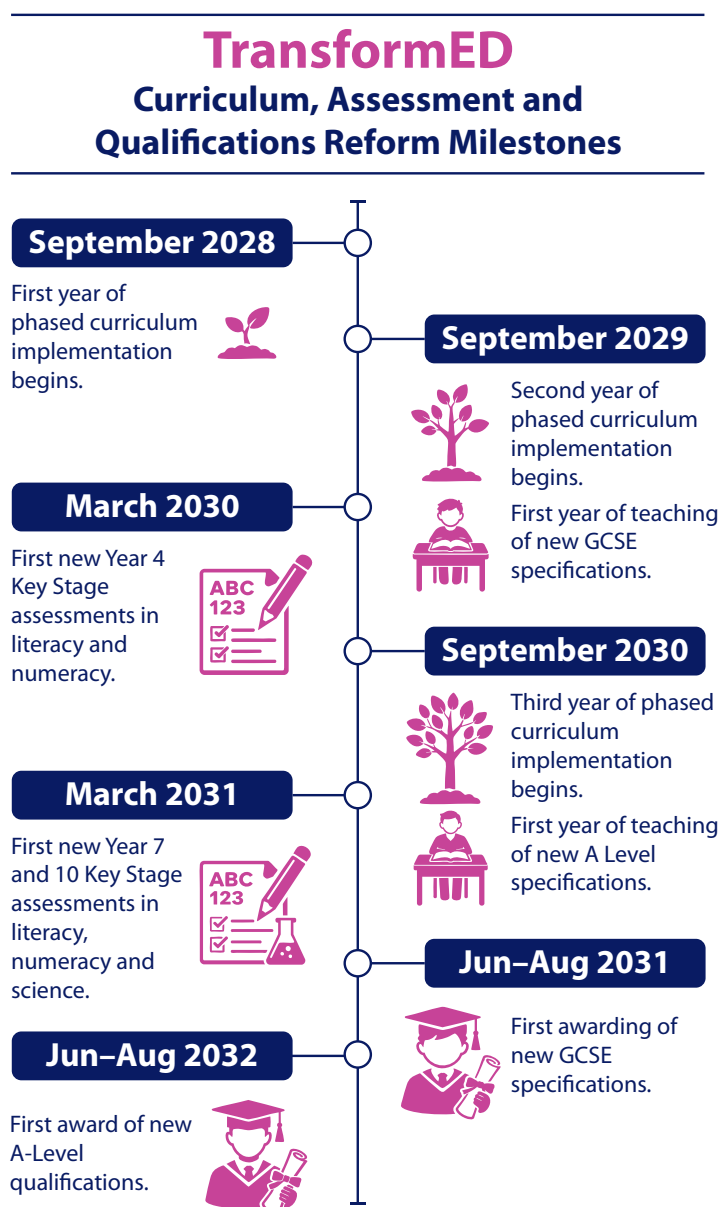


Phase 3. September 2031 onwards: embedding and continuous improvement.

Curriculum implementation will be supported by ongoing review cycles, subject evaluations and continued investment in professional learning. The intention is to ensure that the curriculum remains responsive to evidence while providing the stability that schools require to develop high-quality practice.

Implementation roadmap: curriculum, qualifications and assessment

The diagram below shows the milestones for statutory roll out of the curriculum and how these interact with key milestones for assessment and qualification reform.



Supporting effective curriculum change

Implementation of the new curriculum will be underpinned by a number of important principles set out below.

- **Implementation will be gradual and carefully structured**

Schools will be given time to engage with reform, develop expertise and adapt planning arrangements where necessary. This recognises that deep curriculum change is most successful when introduced incrementally and supported by sustained professional development.

- **Professional learning will sit at the centre of the implementation process**

The new curriculum places greater emphasis on clearly specified knowledge, progression and subject coherence. Consequently, teachers will require opportunities to engage with subject content, curriculum design and evidence-informed approaches to teaching and learning. This learning will be available through a combination of face-to-face and online opportunities and will contribute to a shared understanding of effective curriculum implementation across the system.

- **There will be significant investment in curriculum-aligned resources**

These will include curriculum maps, unit plans, progression frameworks, lesson materials and exemplification resources designed to help schools translate statutory requirements into coherent classroom practice. International evidence suggests that high-quality shared resources can support consistency, improve implementation and reduce unnecessary workload for teachers.

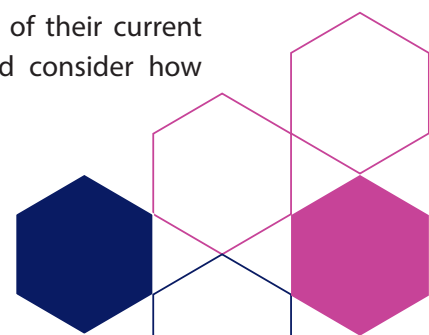
- **System coherence is critically important**

The curriculum is intended to provide a clear foundation for wider developments in assessment, qualifications, teacher education and school improvement. As a result, implementation support will seek to ensure consistency and alignment across different areas of the education system.

Looking ahead

The current consultation and preparation period offers an important opportunity to engage with the rationale for reform, explore the proposed curriculum structure and consider the implications for teaching, learning and progression. Building a shared understanding among teaching staff will provide a strong foundation for future implementation.

As schools prepare for change, they may wish to reflect on the strengths of their current curriculum, identify areas where progression could be strengthened and consider how professional learning opportunities can support future development.



Discussion questions for schools

1. Does the preparation phase provide enough time to build staff readiness?
2. What concerns, if any, do we have about the implementation timeline?
3. What forms of professional learning would staff find most useful?
4. Are there aspects of the curriculum that should be prioritised for professional learning?

Key message

Implementation should be viewed as a long-term process of improvement.

The success of curriculum reform will depend upon building understanding, confidence and capacity across the education system so that every learner can benefit from a coherent, ambitious and knowledge-rich curriculum.

Recommended reading

- Curriculum 2028: [Overview paper](#) (chapter 8)

