



Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary curricula and the National Curriculum for England

The Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary curricula for English, mathematics and science have been mapped against the National Curriculum for England that came into force in September 2015. In this guide we outline the main similarities and differences between them so that you can be assured the standards are equivalent.

Cambridge curricula

Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary programmes include curricula for English, mathematics and science, English as a Second Language and Global Perspectives (from 2018). Of these only English, mathematics and science are also in the National Curriculum for England. Therefore this document only compares the curricula for these three subjects.

Cambridge curriculum frameworks reflect the teaching targets for each year group and provide comprehensive learning objectives. The learning objectives provide a structure for teaching and learning and a reference against which learners' ability and understanding can be checked.

It is not compulsory to study all of the subjects and schools can select the elements that are right for their learners.

Cambridge Primary

- Developed for the first six years of schooling – typically for 5 to 11 year olds.
- Organised into six stages.
- Develops the skills, knowledge and understanding that will prepare learners for a smooth transition to Cambridge Lower Secondary.

For more information visit

www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridgeprimary

Cambridge Lower Secondary

- Developed for the next three years of study – typically for 11 to 14 year olds.
- Organised into three stages.
- Develops the skills, knowledge and understanding that will prepare learners for a smooth transition to Cambridge Upper Secondary.

For more information visit

www.cambridgeinternational.org/lowersecondary



Comparison: Cambridge Primary curricula and the National Curriculum for England

Cambridge Primary English

Similarities

- Extensive. By the end of Stage 6, learners following the Cambridge Primary English curriculum framework will have covered nearly all of the same ground as those following the National Curriculum.
- Both curricula teach reading and writing in a progressive way using a phonics approach to early reading and spelling.
- As students progress, they develop an increasing selection of strategies for reading and spelling unfamiliar words. The emphasis in reading begins to shift to comprehension and the reading of a wide variety of text types.
- In both curricula, writing composition is developed from simple texts through to writing varied texts for different purposes and audiences.
- Handwriting in both curricula progresses from learning to form the letters correctly, to beginning to add the strokes needed for joining and, finally, writing legibly and fluently in joined-up handwriting.

Differences

- The learning outcomes for spoken language are the same in each year of the National Curriculum and 'the content should be taught at a level appropriate to the age of the student'. In contrast, the outcomes for the Cambridge Primary English framework are more explicit in terms of what is required at each stage – they gradually build in their demand.

Cambridge Primary Mathematics

Similarities

- Extensive. By the end of Stage 6, learners following the Cambridge Primary Mathematics curriculum framework will have covered nearly all of the same ground as those following the National Curriculum. The majority of the statutory and non-statutory learning outcomes from Key Stage 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum are covered in the Cambridge Primary Mathematics framework.
- Problem solving remains central to both curricula but the approach is different. The Cambridge curriculum contains a separate curriculum strand relating to problem solving whereas the National Curriculum does not.

Differences

- Much of the work is covered across stages within the Cambridge Primary Mathematics curriculum framework so that a learning outcome from a particular year in the National Curriculum may be partially covered in the equivalent stage of the Cambridge curriculum and completed in the following stage.
- The outcomes for Number in the National Curriculum are more extensive by the end of Stage 6.
- The National Curriculum requires that students are fluent in formal columnar methods of calculation whereas the Cambridge curriculum allows the school to select the calculation method.

Cambridge Primary Science

Similarities

- Extensive. By the end of Stage 6, learners following the Cambridge Primary Science curriculum framework will have covered nearly all of the same ground as those following the National Curriculum.

Differences

- The non-statutory guidance in the National Curriculum provides more information about how content and skills can be taught, although information of this kind is included in the Cambridge schemes of work.
- The National Curriculum provides 'Working scientifically' requirements for embedding within the content for each pair of year groups (Years 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6), but the Cambridge Primary Science framework provides learning objectives for Scientific Enquiry for every stage.



Comparison: Cambridge Lower Secondary curricula and the National Curriculum for England

When studying the tables below, please note that the National Curriculum for England outcomes are listed for Key Stage 3 (the period of schooling in England between ages 11–14) as a whole. A learner following the Cambridge curriculum will not necessarily have covered the same material as a learner at an equivalent age following the National Curriculum for England. The same topics will be covered at the end of the programme but not always in the same year. If a learner is transferring schools partway through Key Stage 3, parents and teachers are advised to look at the programme of study for each school to check alignment.

Cambridge Lower Secondary English

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive. By the end of Stage 9, learners following the Cambridge Lower Secondary English curriculum framework will have covered nearly all of the same ground as those following the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. Learners following either programme should have been taught equivalent skills in the four curriculum areas that form part of the National Curriculum: Reading, Writing, Grammar and Vocabulary and Spoken English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studying the works of Shakespeare is a requirement of the National Curriculum but is not required by the Cambridge curriculum. However, the works of Shakespeare can be selected as examples of drama by teachers. The Cambridge curriculum continues to explicitly require learners to develop their listening skills in addition to their speaking skills, which is no longer part of the National Curriculum.

Cambridge Lower Secondary Mathematics

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive. By the end of Stage 9, learners following the Cambridge Lower Secondary Mathematics curriculum framework will have covered nearly all of the same ground as those following the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. The Cambridge Lower Secondary Mathematics curriculum is similar in content to the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum has a section called 'Working mathematically' that lists a set of overarching skills that should be taught through the mathematics content. The Cambridge Lower Secondary Mathematics framework has a similar section titled 'Problem solving'. In both curricula, learners are expected to develop a mathematical fluency that allows them to interpret and solve problems, even in novel contexts, and then evaluate their answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are some minor differences at topic level. For example, 'the intercept of a graph' is not explicitly mentioned in the Cambridge curriculum, although teachers may choose to cover this when studying graphs.

Cambridge Lower Secondary Science

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive. By the end of Stage 9, learners following the Cambridge Lower Secondary Science curriculum framework will have covered nearly all of the same ground as those following the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. The Cambridge Lower Secondary Science framework and the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 both have a section called 'Working scientifically', which covers scientific attitudes and processes. The objectives included in these sections are meant to be taught across the three science disciplines. Learners who master these objectives will have the knowledge and skills to plan and conduct their own investigations and critically review the work of others, regardless of which curriculum they followed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are some minor differences at topic level. For example, 'exercise and asthma' is not explicitly mentioned in the Cambridge curriculum, although teachers may choose to cover this when studying the respiratory system.



Why Cambridge International?

If your school follows the National Curriculum in England, Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary can provide a valuable addition. The Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary Progression Tests can be used in school to track your learners' progress compared with those in international schools around the world. The diagnostic software allows you to produce reports on learners' strengths and areas for development, to feed back into learning. In addition, you can enter candidates for Cambridge Primary Checkpoint and Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint tests, which offer comprehensive feedback on learners' achievements.

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridgepathway

Support for teachers

We produce a teacher guide for each subject curriculum area, which brings together schemes of work, sample lesson plans, planning and implementation guidance. There are also detailed schemes of work with suggestions for activities, resources and timings for each learning objective within the curriculum frameworks.

- Further information for teachers: www.cambridgeinternational.org/teachers
- Cambridge Primary support site: <https://primary.cambridgeinternational.org>
- Cambridge Lower Secondary support site: <https://lowersecondary.cambridgeinternational.org>