Questions for governing bodies to ask: Curriculum and assessment

6. How well does the curriculum provide for and stretch all pupils? (see also questions 2, 3, 7, 10 &12)

Questions to senior leaders:

a) What is our curriculum rationale? What are the key curriculum drivers in this school? (e.g. The National Curriculum, local curriculum, league tables, Ofsted, pupil needs. What is the balance of these?)

b) How do we ensure our pupils receive a broad and balanced education?
   i. How do we know that the curriculum meets the particular needs of each of our pupils?
   ii. How do we ensure there is an appropriate balance in terms of subjects?
   iii. How do we ensure students gain the skills they need (as well as the knowledge) and develop appropriate attitudes to enable them to flourish in and outside of school?
   iv. How do we ensure that every colleague/every team plays their part?

c) If there were no rules, would you change the curriculum?
   i. If so, what's stopping you?

d) How do you ensure that the curriculum across the school promotes
   i. the ethos of the school
   ii. the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?

e) What do internal assessments by staff tell us and parents? I.e. is it just pupils' progress through the curriculum? Or does it tell us about the skills, values, and personal qualities they've developed? How does it help parents support their child's learning?

f) How could the curriculum be made more exciting/stand out more?

g) Have you asked the pupils what they want from the curriculum? And what did they say?

h) What do other local schools offer in their curriculum which is different from ours?

i) How does the school use partnerships with other schools/businesses/the local community to enhance the curriculum?
   i. Have you developed links with the infant/junior/middle/secondary school(s) and FE /tertiary institutions

j) How are staff encouraged to be more innovative about the teaching of the curriculum?
   i. Is there sufficient lesson differentiation to provide for students of all abilities?

k) How are you encouraging different key stage staff to collaborate and inter-department collaboration?

l) How do you know that our assessment systems are robust and accurately measure pupils' progress?

m) Have all staff received training on how to make best use of our assessment system? Are all teachers using the assessment system consistently and how do you know?

n) Do you meet with other schools to moderate assessment levels – e.g. those which use the same assessment system?

o) Have you explained to parents that the way in which children are assessed is changing/has changed?

p) How are teachers communicating the results of their assessment to pupils and parents?
  i. What feedback have we had from parents about how well this is done?
q) What information do you hold about the destinations of our pupils when they leave this school?
  i. What use do you make of this information?
r) If the school has purchased an assessment system from an external provider:
  i. Does this meet our school's individual needs?
  ii. How do we know the system is robust?
  iii. What has the impact been on teacher workload?
  iv. How do we know it is good value for money?

Academies:

s) Have you chosen to continue to teach the National Curriculum? If so, why?
t) Have you considered moving away from the National Curriculum? Why? How?

For schools using the National Curriculum:
u) How do you ensure all teaching staff are clear about the National Curriculum requirements – especially given the impending changes?
v) What proportion of the week do pupils spend on the National Curriculum?
  i. Is this too much? Too little? Or about right?
  ii. How have you developed the offer for the remaining time?
w) What skills or competencies do we want our children to leave with?
  i. To what extent are they being developed?
  ii. How can this be improved?

Primary schools:
x) Are we meeting the requirements for computing, as part of the new National Curriculum? Have our staff received training on how to deliver the new programmes of study?

Qualifications:

y) Do we offer a broad range of qualifications?
  i. If not, have we considered ways we could broaden our offer, such as collaborating with other schools?
z) What influences our decision about which qualifications to offer? (e.g. government policy, performance tables, pupils' needs, staffing, resources) Is this the right balance?
aa) What guidance is available to pupils about which qualifications they should take? Is this impartial and in the best interests of pupils?

For schools with sixth forms:

bb) Do we know how much each post-16 course costs to run compared to take-up?
  i. Do we know why some courses are less popular than others?
  ii. Are less popular courses achieving good value for money, specifically regarding quality of education?