

Goodbye Drama

Mayk way for fonix and spelink

Mr Gove should be ashamed that Drama does not appear in the new draft primary curriculum for English that was released in early June.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a00210036/sosletter>

Drama is not expected to appear anywhere else as a subject either. No new curriculum subjects are going to be added now, apparently, (except a modern language from age 7).

This is a dull, prescriptive and uninspiring 'back to basics' draft curriculum that lacks vision and imagination. Primary children will soon be bored unless they have teachers who are very imaginative in the ways they teach it. A lot of time and money could have been saved if the experts had just dusted off some old Victorian textbooks and tests and presented them as the 'new' English programme of study. Why put it online? They could have sent it all out on slates and then got industry to sponsor some quills and inkpots (with their logos on of course).

Fonics and spelink rool (pages of it). Playscripts get only one mention and that is in relation to reading plays and comprehension, not performing them. Reciting poetry also has a strong place. Speaking and listening seems to be mainly about debating and presenting and as a preparation for writing. It is all very 'public school'. I can't imagine why!

Mr Gove should explain publicly why some arts are still being given higher status than others. Art and Design and Music will still (rightly) have their national curriculum place – but not Drama. Expensive, time consuming 'consultations' and



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reports are commissioned and then ignored. Remember Ken Robinson's *All Our Futures* report (1999)? It recommended that the Arts should all have equal curriculum status. This was ignored. The recent Henley report that the current government commissioned also recommended that Drama should be a curriculum subject in its own right. This was also selectively ignored.

The primary curriculum needs to be broad not 'slim' and should be actively and meaningfully taught. Mr Gove thinks young children should focus on basic subjects first and others later. Neuroscientific research about the plasticity of brains seems to

suggest the opposite is true.

ND was represented at various early DfE meetings about English and has been proactive in writing to Mr Gove, the DfE and selected MPs from time to time. We received carefully worded replies from Nick Gibb. Mr Gove did not reply himself. When I was attending the launch of Henley's 'Cultural Education' report, I asked Mr Gove directly, what he saw the role of drama teachers being in the future. He acknowledged their importance in signposting the most talented students to drama schools.

I urge both secondary and primary drama teachers to formally respond to the draft primary curriculum when the opportunity arises in September 2012. You will note there is a time lapse of two months between publication and the opening of the consultation that must not be allowed to reduce or weaken our responses. The number of responses will be noted, so let's swamp the DfE.

Meanwhile, I am wondering if Mr Gove's focus on poetry and phonics tests (that contain 'alien' nonsense words) for 6 year olds, could lead to a new generation of Lewis Carrolls. It is, probably, creatively the best they can hope for!

*'The time has come,' the Minister said,
'To talk of facts and things:
Of phonics – grammar – spelling –
The dates of bygone kings
But let's not talk of Drama
Ideas are dangerous things.'*

Patrice Baldwin
Chair of National Drama