National Curriculum
If you are planning to go into a school then it is beneficial to link your session to the curriculum. This will make it easier for teachers to accommodate your visit into their schedule and will help provide focus to your session.

This briefing covers

**Introduction** ................................................................. 2
  ○ Key stages
  ○ Statutory & non-statutory

**Curriculum change** ............................................................. 2

**Opportunities for linking environmental issues** .......................... 3
  ○ Citizenship, geography, science
  ○ Other subjects

**Find out more** ................................................................. 6
National Curriculum

Introduction
The National Curriculum sets out the stages and core subjects that children will be taught during their time at school. It applies to all pupils of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years) in ‘maintained’ (Local Education Authority funded) schools in England.

Schools in Wales and Northern Ireland follow a similar curriculum framework to England (Scotland has its own qualification and curriculum framework).
- The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for curriculum developments in Wales.
- The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) is responsible for the curriculum in Northern Ireland.

Both work in collaboration with the Qualifications Curriculum Authority – the governing body in England.

For more information on the curriculum in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please follow the links on page 6.

Key stages
The National Curriculum (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) is organised into blocks of years called ‘key stages’. There are four key stages as well as an ‘Early Years Foundation Stage’. The Early Years Foundation Stage covers education for children before they reach five (compulsory school age).

Primary school
- Key stage 1  5 to 7 year olds  school years 1 and 2
- Key stage 2  7 to 11 year olds  school years 3 to 6

Secondary school
- Key stage 3  11 to 14 year olds  school years 7 to 9
- Key stage 4  14 to 16 year olds  school years 10 and 11

The information contained here focuses on the requirements and opportunities for the key stage 3 and 4 curriculum (Friends of the Earth’s priority audience for the youth and education programme). For more information on the key stage 1 and 2 curriculum please follow the links on page 6.

Statutory and non-statutory
The statutory subjects that all pupils must study are art and design, citizenship, design and technology (D&T), English, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and science.

The curriculum also includes non-statutory programmes of study for:
- religious education, based on the Framework for Religious Education
- personal, social, healthcare and economic education (PSHE), which includes sex and relationship education, financial capability and careers education as well as general personal wellbeing.
Curriculum change
The National Curriculum is undergoing a major overhaul. A **new secondary curriculum** has been developed to increase flexibility for both teachers and pupils:
- there is less prescription on subject content,
- teachers are able to tailor the curriculum to the needs of individual learners,
- there will be more space within the school day for pupils to study areas in more depth.

Implementation of the new curriculum
- **Key stage 3**
  - Year 7 2008; Year 8 2009; Year 9 2010
- **Key stage 4**
  - from 2009

Opportunities for linking environmental issues
Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), citizenship, geography and science all offer excellent opportunities for exploring environmental issues.

Global dimension and sustainable development (formally Education for Sustainable Development or ESD)
Education for the global dimension and sustainable development is a **cross-curriculum theme** (ie provides focus for work between subjects and across the whole curriculum) which helps young people to appreciate issues of global significance. Looking at challenges such as poverty, inequality, conflict and economic and environmental damage – young people learn to recognise their responsibilities as members of a global community.

PSHE
PSHE helps pupils to lead confident, healthy and responsible lives as individuals and members of society. Through work in lesson time and a wide range of activities across and beyond the curriculum, pupils gain practical knowledge and skills to help them live healthily and deal with the spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues they face as they approach adulthood. For example pupils may be asked to consider social and moral dilemmas such as how the choices they make as consumers affect other people’s economies and environments.

Citizenship
Citizenship equips pupils with the knowledge and skills needed for effective and democratic participation. It helps pupils to become active citizens who have the confidence and conviction to work collaboratively, take action and try to make a difference in their communities and the wider world.

Citizenship addresses issues relating to:
- social justice and human rights,
- community cohesion and global interdependence,
- and encourages pupils to challenge injustice, inequalities and discrimination.

It helps young people to develop their critical skills, consider a wide range of political, social, ethical and moral problems, and explore opinions and ideas other than their own.

Where to focus
Class discussions/debates to encourage critical and reflective thinking; building the skills and knowledge to justify personal opinions about issues, problems or events. Use imagination to consider other people’s experiences (eg role-play). Research local issues; participate in decision-making in school, local community and beyond, participation in local campaigns.
The best citizenship learning occurs when what is taught in the curriculum enables students to have a “real” impact on the wider community. For example, the best way to help students understand the key concept of justice is likely to be through investigating and **taking action** on an issue of injustice.

**Geography**

Geography inspires pupils to become global citizens by exploring their own place in the world, their values and their responsibilities to other people, to the environment and to the sustainability of the planet.

The study of geography:
- stimulates an interest in and a sense of wonder about places,
- helps young people make sense of a complex and dynamically changing world,
- explains how places and landscapes are formed, how people and their environment interact,
- and how a diverse range of economies, societies and environments are interconnected.

Geographical enquiry encourages questioning, investigation and critical thinking about issues affecting the world and people’s lives, now and in the future.

**Where to focus**

Exploring major weather events, sustainable development and its implications for people, places and environments, how conflicting demands on an environment arise and how to manage these demands. The changing environment and adaptation, resource use, how values and attitudes affect contemporary social, environmental, economic and political issues.

The new secondary curriculum allows greater control than before; teachers can now make geography topical and relevant to the needs of their pupils and the communities in which they live.

**Science**

The study of science fires pupils’ curiosity about phenomena in the world around them and offers opportunities to find explanations. Experimentation and modeling are used to develop and evaluate explanations, encouraging critical and creative thought.

The science curriculum enables learners to:
- discover how scientific ideas contribute to technological change – affecting industry, business and medicine and improving quality of life
- learn to question and discuss issues that may affect their own lives, the directions of societies and the future of the world (including the environment).

**Where to focus**

Habitats, bio-diversity and interdependence; ways in which living things and the environment can be protected; effects of burning fossil fuels on the environment and alternative technologies. Look at the variety of energy resources, including oil, gas, coal, biomass, food, wind and waves, and the distinction between renewable and non-renewable resources.

The subject of science also provides an opportunity to explore the ethical and moral implications of scientific and technological developments (eg nuclear power).
Whilst citizenship, geography and science provide the most obvious opportunities you can link environmental issues to almost any subject if you frame your session in the correct way, for example:

**Religious education (RE)**
RE has an important contribution to make in relation to young people’s ‘spiritual health’ and can make a major contribution to giving pupils insights into issues of sustainability and community cohesion.

Explore rights and responsibilities; what religions and beliefs say about human rights and responsibilities, social justice and citizenship. Look at global issues – what religions and beliefs say about animal rights and the environment (can link to citizenship and history).

**English**
Speaking, listening, group discussions, drama, look at/analyse different texts, media, TV, radio, writing – imaginative, persuasive arguments, conveying information – leaflets, poems, articles, campaign material (can link to citizenship and ICT).

**Mathematics**
Problem solving, graphs (eg mapping weather patterns over recent years), statistics, data, future predictions, communicating, reasoning, collecting data – questionnaires, surveys, handling data (can link to ICT, science and geography).

**Design and technology (D&T)**
Global and environmental impact of products, assessment for sustainability, green designs, teaching should ensure that knowledge and understanding are applied when developing ideas, planning, producing products and evaluating them.

**Information and communication technology (ICT)**
Source information, collecting, recording information, presenting and sharing information, communicating, e-mail, sharing views in the wider world.

**History**
Significance of historical events, interpreting historical events, historical enquiry – using ICT, photos, documents, books, looking at political, religious and social changes.

**Art and design**
Look at different cultures and art, natural and man made objects, use the environment as your inspiration – ideas from the natural world, visits to galleries and museums, investigate environmentally friendly materials, junk modeling.

**Music**
Listen to environmental songs; write your own, change song lyrics.

**Modern foreign languages**
Use environmental case studies, texts.

**Physical education**
Link with PSHE; exercise – walking, not using the car all the time; eating well – organic food/locally produced. Outdoor activities – be out in your environment.
Find out more
For more information on the curriculum and related topics, the following websites are useful:

The Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
http://curriculum.qca.org.uk
The QCA maintain and develop the national curriculum and associated assessments, tests and examinations. This comprehensive website contains everything you need to know about the curriculum and allows you to search by key stage or subject area. For information about the primary curriculum check out http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-1-and-2/index.aspx

Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) formally DfES
www.dcsf.gov.uk
UK government department with responsibility for children's services, families, schools.

Teachernet
www.teachernet.gov.uk
This comprehensive website for teachers includes discussion forums, lesson plans and lots more.

Wales
Welsh Assembly Government
www.wales.gov.uk
Provides leadership, policies and guidance on education in Wales; responsible for drafting the content of the National Curriculum subjects.

Northern Ireland
Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
www.ccea.org.uk
Provides advice on and support for what is taught in schools and colleges in Northern Ireland and how it is assessed.

Scotland
Learning and Teaching Scotland
www.ltscotland.org.uk
Provides advice, support and resources to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in Scotland. Funded by the Scottish Government, LTS is the main organisation for the development of the Scottish curriculum.

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The information in this briefing contains extracts from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) website http://curriculum.qca.org.uk

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