MEDIA & INFORMATION LITERACY EXPERTS' JOINT STATEMENT

RESPONDING TO THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT REVIEW OUTCOME

Background

Who we are

We, the undersigned, represent a range of organisations and elected representatives whose remit includes: media and information literacy (MIL), particularly in school education and curriculum subjects; media studies teachers; librarians across a range of settings but especially school librarianship; citizenship and democratic education; strengthening our information ecosystem more broadly; and the Political & Media Literacy APPG.

We are writing jointly following the publication of the government's response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review to share the extent to which we consider the agreed changes reflective of the current needs and challenges we observe in schools, as well as what we see in the near future. This statement builds on a prior joint statement co-ordinated by the Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA) in June 2025 and co-signed by 14 organisations in response to the Curriculum Review's interim report.

Key terms

We recognise the term 'media literacy' is used throughout the Curriculum Review and government response. We interpret this to mean both 'media and information literacy' given both concepts are closely aligned. Together they form a holistic environment of competencies that, in our view, should sit at the heart of a modern, relevant, fit-for-purpose education system.[1] We therefore adopt this hybrid phrase, 'media and information literacy' (MIL), throughout our own statement.

As a short-hand, MILA defines 'media and information literacy' as: the ability to engage fully with media and information in people's connected daily lives.

The policy context for media and information literacy in 2025

2025 has seen a concentrated focus in the UK on media and information literacy and its criticality. This has been recognised in:

- The Curriculum and Assessment Interim Review Report which highlighted the urgent need for media literacy, critical thinking and subject expertise in a rapidly changing world.

- The Elections Strategy that announced the lowering of the voting age which referred to 'supporting effective and relevant democratic education in schools.'

- The House of Lords Digital and Communications Committee Media Literacy report which concluded that the failure to prioritise media literacy presents a risk to social cohesion and democracy, and recommended embedding media and information literacy across the curriculum.

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[1] For more detail on this holistic environment of competencies, see here.

As a broad coalition of organisations, we recognise that some positive steps have already been made by this government including: a commitment to producing a cross-government Media Literacy Vision Statement, the establishment of a new media literacy cross-government working group, and the appointment of a minister with explicit responsibility for media literacy coordination and strategy in government.

However, this statement reflects our view on the extent to which the final Curriculum and Assessment Review and the government's response meets the current needs and challenges we observe in schools, as well as those we see in the near future.

Our goals and reflections on recommended changes to the National Curriculum

1. Media and information literacy for children and young people in school settings

Our goals for the curriculum

1.1. MIL should be a statutory, mandatory educational entitlement for every child at primary and secondary school stages – with the same status and attention paid to it as reading and writing.

1.2. MIL education should be embedded consistently, coherently and prominently across the whole curriculum in order to help young people routinely apply critical inquiry, reading, and reflection skills to all forms of information and media that they encounter, use, share and create. This should include English, media studies and Citizenship, as well as being an integral part of wider curriculum subjects (such as, mathematics, science, computing, art, history and geography), and PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) education, including statutory RSHE elements of the subject.

1.3. Cross-curricular MIL education would ideally be supported by an overarching MIL framework. This could include core principles and terminology that sets out what good MIL looks like at each key stage – both primary and secondary – and across different subject areas: within the specified National Curriculum subjects; in relation to RSHE in the basic curriculum; as well as opportunities to strengthen MIL within qualification subjects such as Citizenship Studies, English, Media Studies and relevant vocational qualifications, including T levels and BTEC. This would help ensure all aspects of MIL receive sufficient coverage as well as help prevent duplication of content across the curriculum. It would ideally also be supported by a set of benchmarks by which a school and its library service could self-assess its delivery of MIL.

1.4. MIL should enable young people to engage actively as citizens and creative media producers in the media and information environment, contributing to social cohesion and empowering informed democratic participation.

1.5. MIL should not be seen and taught solely in the context of protection against online harms, including mis- and dis-information, cyberbullying, and deliberately divisive online content. It should instead be extended to developing a critical understanding of the entire evolving media and information environment.

How far has this been met by the Curriculum Review and government response?

1.6. We welcome the strengthening of MIL in the National Curriculum for Citizenship and English. We are especially pleased that MIL, as part of citizenship education, will be taught in primary schools from KS1.

1.7.　In line with our goals described at 1.4 and 1.5, the incorporation of MIL within Citizenship as a subject allows for a critical, holistic approach to media literacy. This is a positive step beyond earlier interpretations of media literacy as a set of skills purely for enabling greater safety online and beyond the overly narrow conceptualisation as one of spotting fake news. Overall, this reflects a stronger, more critical and more empowering approach to media literacy which as a collective, we strongly support.

1.8.　The inclusion of AI literacy into Computing has created some ambiguity surrounding the extent to which students will be fully empowered to engage critically with our modern and rapidly changing media environment. Whilst we recognise the role of AI literacy as an important functional skill in Computing, critical AI literacy is a crucial component of MIL.

1.8.1.　**Recommendation 1**

The government should make critical AI literacy a more explicit component of MIL within Citizenship to ensure this gains sufficient coverage by teachers.

1.9.　In addition to Citizenship and English, we welcome the Review's recognition of the relevance of MIL to subjects such as History and Science and see this as representing greater prominence of MIL across the curriculum as a whole. In line with our goal at 1.2., we would like to see this recognition explicitly extended to a wider range of subjects, although we recognise that this could pose challenges for space and time in the school day.

Greater clarification of the roles and distinctions between 'media literacy' and 'digital literacy' is needed to help teachers implement these reforms. This will be key for those involved in redrafting the National Curriculum subject programmes of study and teaching requirements for all subjects and qualifications subject content specifications.

We agree with the Curriculum Review that, to work successfully, a curriculum must follow the principle of 'coherence' both vertically, through all phases, as well as horizontally facilitating links across subjects. We note that the government has agreed to adopt this principle. However, we are concerned that without additional MIL expertise guiding the development of the National Curriculum and indeed without supportive tools highlighting best practice for schools, such as a cross-cutting MIL framework, the inclusion of media literacy across the curriculum could lack this coherence or even be duplicative.

1.9.1.　**Recommendation 2**

As described in goal 1.3, the government, in collaboration with MIL experts, should develop and publish a cross-cutting MIL framework - much like the oracy framework announced in the response to the Curriculum Review. This framework should include core principles and terminology, set out what good MIL looks like at each key stage – both primary and secondary – and across different subject areas, along with benchmarks by which schools could assess MIL delivery, including the use of school librarians to support this. This could also include links to best practice resources (see Recommendation 3.4.3 below). We would be happy to offer such support to develop this framework to the DfE.

The government should also ensure that those appointed to develop different subjects of the National Curriculum and specifications for the different qualification subjects consult with MIL experts to ensure that there is sufficient coverage and coherence across the whole curriculum.

1.10.   As indicated at point 1.4, the ability to develop creative skills i.e. to create new media is an important aspect of both practicing the knowledge and skills developed throughout other aspects of the MIL curriculum, but also fully enables students to become media experts themselves, both in the classroom, among their peers as well as with their families. We recognise that the additional enrichment entitlement may incorporate the development of media production skills elsewhere in the curriculum. However, we are concerned that such skills are not currently stated explicitly anywhere in the review or government response.

> ### 1.10.1.   Recommendation 3
>
> The DfE in the development of the curriculum and the cross-cutting media literacy framework should clarify that media literacy includes development of skills to become media creators and clarify where in the curriculum such skills should be developed e.g. within Citizenship or, for example, Art and Design etc.

2. Schools Inspection framework

Our goal

2.1.   Ofsted should evaluate and report on the quality of teaching of media and information literacy in different subjects across the curriculum. Media and information literacy should be incorporated into the inspection framework to include formal assessment of knowledge and skills. This will support preparation for England's future participation in the new PISA 2029 Innovative Domain on Media and Artificial Intelligence Literacy.

How far has this been met?

2.2.   We note that in September 2025, Ofsted published a reformed school inspection system and report cards alongside a schools toolkit. We note that the toolkit sets expectations around how to ensure pupils stay safe online. Such a focus on safety continues the ongoing narrow and protectionist interpretation of MIL as limited to online safety and does not reflect the depth and breadth of skills needed as highlighted above or indeed the current framing within the Curriculum and Assessment Review and government response.

> ### 2.2.1.   Recommendation 4
>
> Ofsted should provide an updated school inspection toolkit reflecting changes to the curriculum that assesses the quality of curriculum and teaching relating to media and information literacy moving beyond its current limited inclusion purely within safeguarding.

3. Delivery of MIL in schools – teachers, librarians and resources

Our goals

3.1.   MIL should form a part of initial teacher training for all new teachers and continuous professional development for existing teachers. This should be delivered through schools developing a media and information literacy policy that includes regular professional development. The design of a teacher training programme should be informed by previous pilot schemes and should leverage the expertise of subject associations and specialist media and information literacy organisations like ourselves.

3.2.   School librarians are crucial in the delivery of media and information literacy education. The curriculum should specifically highlight the essential role of a professionally staffed school library in fostering MIL, and recommend sustained investment in library

provision and the cross-curricular role of school librarians to support the curriculum. This goes beyond the current narrower focus on reading for pleasure.

3.3. Teachers of MIL need a clear, easy-to-access repository of relevant resources for teaching media and information literacy. Where a school librarian is in post they may already be delivering MIL skills for students and their expertise can form part of the resourcing for teachers, but this needs appropriate signposting and support

How far has this been met?

3.4. We recognise that teacher training sat outside of the scope of the Review. We also recognise the significant time constraints for teachers and CPD. However, we wish to emphasise that the success of an extended and strengthened curriculum depends on additional teacher training provision, professional librarians as well as high quality resources. There are specialists who may already be well-placed to lead on in-school training, such as librarians or media studies teachers. Whole school approaches should be inclusive of all teaching and support staff where they interact with students through the curriculum.

3.4.1. **Recommendation 5**

Given the existing constraints on school budgets, time pressures to undertake CPD and the critical importance of providing this training to support teachers with the additional requirements, we recommend that funding is provided to schools to support adequate and ongoing MIL training for teachers and librarians to develop their own schools' MIL curriculum that reflects the needs of their local school context and children and to train their peers within their school.

We understand that DfE's funding to support schools with the transition to the new curriculum is currently limited.

We also note that the House of Lords' Digital and Communications Committee Media Literacy report recognised the funding challenges facing media literacy and recommended a levy on technology platforms as an important tool to securing long-term stable funding. This recommendation was rejected by the government in favour of a "diverse and dynamic funding landscape... that includes government, local authorities, civil society and technology."

We therefore recommend exploring alternative funding routes, capitalising on the impetus provided by the media literacy cross-government working group, recently established to help coordinate and bolster whole-society media literacy efforts led by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for AI and Online Safety, Kanishka Narayan. This could perhaps include funding provided via DSIT or DCMS.

We also note the additional funding made available for democratic education via the Electoral Commission of which media literacy is a critical aspect and suggest that such funding could also be used to empower teachers. While delivery of media literacy teacher training is not within Ofcom's duties (though it is able to run small pilots and identify practice), the government may also wish to re-evaluate this scope.

3.4.2. Recommendation 6

We recommend that all ITT providers, with support from subject associations and MIL expert organisations, ensure that MIL is integrated into their standard provision for training new teachers.

3.4.3. Recommendation 7

We recommend that the DfE signposts to and supports the creation of an individual easy-to-access repository of relevant and high quality resources for MIL. This should be kept up to date to address emerging threats and trends such that teachers are able to access resources that keep children engaged and prepare them to participate responsibly in changing online spaces.

We note the government response to the Curriculum Review has underlined that Oak National Academy will be used to provide resources. However, we note a single resource provider approach is restrictive. This would therefore limit the scope of the resources that could be made available from the existing MIL expert community should a more flexible repository be made available. We would be happy to collaborate with the Oak Academy to adapt its current approach or others, so that it could incorporate the MIL community's diverse resources.

The repository should include resources that support the learning of children with special educational needs and disabilities, and those which can be delivered with and actively reinforced by parents. It should also include options for teachers who, because of a lack of resources, are required to teach MIL through non-digital or semi-digital (e.g. with shared laptops or limited access to internet) environments. The organisations that we represent are well-placed to provide advice and expertise to help ensure that the repository develops into a trusted and recognised source of information.

3.5. We note the recent announcement by the Chancellor that every primary school will be provided with a library by 2029. It remains unclear the extent to which such libraries will be adequately and professionally staffed with personnel who are able to deliver media and information literacy, beyond just books and a reading space. There was also a notable absence of mention of school librarians in the Curriculum Review and government response.

3.5.1. Recommendation 8

We recommend that the DfE clarif long term plans for enabling all school libraries to be staffed with professionally qualified librarians. Consideration should be given not just to the space but also to how the library will be used, factoring in such skills as MIL, given that school librarians are well placed to support approaches to MIL.

4. Future engagement

4.1. To date, the expert MIL community has found it challenging to achieve direct engagement opportunities with the DfE. We warmly welcome the step change in inclusion of MIL within the government's response to the Curriculum Review and note the recent appointment of a media and financial literacy policy lead within the DfE. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with the DfE directly on the development of this important area of education policy going forward to ensure that the goals of the Review and those described in the government's response can be achieved.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the DfE publishes its plans for ongoing engagement surrounding the development of this important policy area. We hope this can support the development of a positive and collaborative working relationship in the months and years ahead.

Closing considerations

We deliberately do not go into the detailed implications of teaching MIL for each subject area – this statement reflects higher-level proposals. Our respective organisations will each have their views regarding our own areas of interest in the curriculum and specialisms, but we subscribe to the broad case set out here for ensuring that MIL is fully recognised as an indispensable part of the revised National Curriculum and qualification subjects including Media Studies, Citizenship Studies, Computing and English.

Contact us

Should you or media organisations have questions regarding this statement, please do not hesitate to get back to us via the Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA) at media.infolit.alliance@gmail.com. To contact the APPG for Political and Media Literacy, please contact the secretariat: amelia@shoutoutuk.org.

This statement is also posted online at https://mila.org.uk/mil-car-statement .

Initial signatories (December 2025):

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Esther Chesterman, CEO, National Extension College (NEC)

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Fran Yeoman, Associate Professor in Journalism & Media Literacy and Head of Journalism, Liverpool John Moores University

Annex: List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

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Recommendation 2

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