

Notes on Marlcliffe Primary School's Curriculum Design

In the HMCI commentary 'curriculum and the new education inspection framework', Amanda Spielman identifies three different approaches to curriculum design in schools that were visited in the study: knowledge-led, knowledge-engaged and skills led.

In summary:

Knowledge-Led Approach

The mastery of a body of subject-specific knowledge defined by the school. Skills are generally considered to be an outcome of the curriculum, not its purpose. There is a focus on in-depth understanding of fewer topic areas rather than surface-level understanding of more content.

Knowledge-Engaged Approach

Knowledge underpins and enables the application of skill; children to learn skills alongside knowledge, and both are explicitly developed. There is a need for a certain degree of knowledge to be delivered before demonstrating a skill, but skills are considered first when mapping the curriculum. Knowledge and skills are intertwined.

Skills-Led Approach

The curriculum is designed around skills, learning behaviours and generic knowledge; there is an emphasis on developing the skills pupils would need for future learning, often referring to resilience, a growth mind-set and perseverance. There is limited value on knowledge within the content of the curriculum and delivering skills is the priority.

Marlcliffe's Curriculum Design

Marlcliffe takes a knowledge-engaged approach to designing the curriculum.

We aim to do the following:

- Provide children with knowledge that allows them to build links and enhance their learning across other subject; links are made across the subjects within topics and also influence the Literacy curriculum.
- Give children the knowledge and skills that may be lacking from their home environments to address social disadvantage; this happens in the classroom, in interventions and extra-curricular activities. All teachers are aware of children in receipt of Pupil Premium and explicitly make opportunities for them. These children are also offered subsidised residential visits and trips. There is a weekly homework club for those who do not have home support and nurture groups in Foundation Stage and Key Stage Two, which supports the development of social skills, collaborative behaviour and vocabulary. In addition, extra swimming lessons are offered to children with Pupil Premium who don't pass the required level of proficiency in Y4. Two free yoga club places are given to children who have a background of social disadvantage.
- Make strong links between reading and curriculum access; any children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 not making sufficient reading progress are targeted through interventions; this continues in to Key Stage Two as necessary. Key Stage Two children study a class novel or texts connected with their topic and this introduces curriculum-specific vocabulary.
- Enrich the curriculum through well-planned regular trips to the local area, other settings and two residential trips in Key Stage Two. This is

particularly important for children who may be lacking these experiences in their home lives.

- Enrich the curriculum through additional Arts opportunities. For example, Key Stage Two children take part in the Young Voices collaborative choir concert each year and every child in Year Four learns the clarinet. Extra sporting opportunities are offered to children with Pupil Premium and these children are also given the chance to extend their clarinet lessons for free after Year Four tuition has ended. More able writers and children with Pupil Premium are encouraged to take part in writing events throughout the year.
- Regularly review the curriculum; reflect on strengths and weaknesses and renew as appropriate.
- Include subject-specific progression statements in planning documents which are based on what we expect pupils to know at each particular stage. This is taken from Chris Quigley's 'Milestones'. The sequencing and order of what children are expected to know are clearly detailed and articulated.
- Intelligently repeat content where necessary, to promote efficient recall of core knowledge. This will also be prompted by informal ongoing assessment. Marlcliffe uses scientific enquiry 'characters' (e.g. 'magnifying guy' and 'book boy') throughout school to emphasise the specific key skills required. Home learning also reinforces the curriculum content each half term.
- Summatively formally assess the children's progress, identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and depth of understanding. We will also use this to inform and improve on future curriculum design.
- Children working at a greater depth are given activities that promote intellectual curiosity and in-depth thought; they are encouraged to follow their own lines of enquiry and time is put aside for these.

At Marlcliffe, the National Curriculum provides us with an important benchmark, but beyond it the content and structure of knowledge and how this is delivered is determined by the needs of our pupils and our school context. We believe that our curriculum is implemented through well-taught and appropriately sequenced content, a manageable assessment practice and includes an appropriate model of progression.