

Yorkshire Causeway Schools Trust is a group of schools working together as an organisation.

*"Where everyone is valued and respected, where we share commitment to education that is ambitious, setting the highest expectations and where integrity is the foundation."*

The Trust's key objectives include:

- To raise the standard of educational achievement of all its students

We believe that thoughtful consideration of the content and sequence of the curriculum is key to enabling this to happen. These principles should be interpreted in conjunction with the Trust's assessment principles.

## Key principles for curriculum design

*"A collection of learning materials is no more a curriculum than a pile of bricks is a house. What our students need are carefully organised, sequential, structured introductions to school subjects" (Dylan Wiliam)*

*Good teaching is teachers making informed decisions about what to teach, when to teach and how to teach based on knowledge of the children, good subject knowledge and a range of effective teaching strategies. (Sue Foster)*

- 1. Our curriculum reflects each school's vision and is designed to meet the needs of the children in the school community.**
- 2. We are clear about our rationale for the inclusion of the content of our curriculum: this rationale is understood by all those involved in the teaching of the content.**
- 3. A subject's curriculum is a model of the journey a child must go on in order to get better at that subject. The sequence of learning is considered carefully so that, by keeping up with the expectations of the curriculum, children will be making progress.**
- 4. The curriculum is designed around key concepts and knowledge chosen by our school. New knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and towards defined end points.**
- 5. The curriculum design ensures that key knowledge and concepts are revisited in new contexts. Links between subjects are also sought so that children build a web of interconnected knowledge (schema).**
- 6. We recognise the importance of curriculum leaders having expert knowledge of the subjects for which they are responsible.**
- 7. Teachers are supported to address gaps in their subject knowledge. A curriculum plan will only go as far as the professional development in place to support its implementation.**
- 8. Teachers plan their lessons to help pupils embed key concepts in their long-term memory and apply them fluently.**
- 9. Teachers use assessment to help pupils embed and use knowledge fluently, develop their understanding, and not simply memorise disconnected facts.**
- 10. The full curriculum offer includes more than that which can be measured - moral, physical, creative, speaking, spiritual, social, etc.**

## Recommendations

### ***Thinking through what knowledge to include in the curriculum***

Decisions on coverage begin with a close reading of the national curriculum requirements, including concepts, knowledge, vocabulary and skills.

Research suggests that the better you understand your subject, the easier it becomes to choose which content matters most and the sequence in which it needs to be taught. We need to understand why and when we have chosen to teach something, before planning the best activities to deliver the knowledge.

The facts that have been learned need to be applied in context in order to demonstrate understanding. The implication of this is that we can view assessment in two parts: recall of key facts and application of the facts in a higher order task (e.g., a written explanation).

Planning should begin with clarifying what is the end point (the desired outcome) for the unit of work. Most units of work will begin by making links to previous work and checking on prior learning.

Improving children's knowledge allows them to develop skills which can be applied to complex tasks.

*A rich web of knowledge is what provides the capacity for pupils to learn even more and develop their understanding. This does not preclude the importance of skill. Knowledge and skill are intrinsically linked: skill is a performance built on what a person knows." (Amanda Spielman)*

Concepts ('big ideas') provide a structure for children's learning.

*"Concepts are 'holding baskets' for facts. They help to make sense of multiple pieces of information, and this makes them efficient. Concepts are largely, but not exclusively expressions of important ideas within an academic discipline. Our pupils are entitled to know them and to use them. Concepts enable connections to be made across a disparate range of facts; they reside in the long-term memory and can be called on to make sense of new information. Concepts provide the intellectual architecture on to which new knowledge and insights can be pinned" (Mary Myatt)*

Most decisions about the curriculum include having to leave out valuable things in favour of something even more valuable. This process of deciding what to teach is ongoing and always open to review.

## Potential problems to avoid

It is vital that there is a shared understanding of what we are doing and where we are trying to get to, so that we get long-term improvements not short-term changes.

Although tempting, there are problems with just adapting what is already there. It is worth spending time considering the distinctiveness of each subject which has often become lost in primary schools, especially if content has been chosen to fit around cross-curricular topics.

It would be easy to place too much emphasis on the tools (knowledge maps, etc.) rather than the careful thought about the content and sequence of the learning.

Experienced teachers will need professional development, coaching and follow-on support to assimilate and enact changes of habit.

It is a challenge to keep both the content of the curriculum and the pedagogy coherent. Decisions about the teaching sequence are often dependent on what seeing that there is an opportunity to ensure prior knowledge is in place.

*A subject should essentially be a story, with each new learning sequence inextricably connected to the last, and indeed, to several other parts of the journey. The story would be continuously referenced when every new piece of content was added, ... a process that would significantly aid their memories as the links would effectively and continuously and unconsciously build a strong schema. (Paul Moss)*

The transition between the EYFS curriculum and the national curriculum needs to be carefully considered.

**Vocabulary needs to be taught and read in context (not just as a list of words) and then meaningfully applied.**

It is valuable to take time to view the curriculum from the perspective of a disadvantaged child and a more able child.

Teachers need to be ambitious, yet realistic, about what they expect children to remember. It is better to teach less material in depth. If no-one remembered what was taught, what was the point in teaching it?

As with teaching a class, after the initial input, individuals will respond in different ways. Therefore, the support being offered may need to vary in order to result in long-term improvements (e.g., repeat the message in a different context, reminders/nudges, encouragement, work alongside, share resources, etc.).