



Edgewood Primary School

Building skills and values for life

Curriculum and teaching principles

We believe children learn best when:

- Behaviour for learning is at least good.
- They're working in mixed ability groups.
- They have an element of choice in the difficulty of work they complete.
- Staff ensure children are challenging themselves in the work they choose so they make the greatest progress.
- The curriculum focuses on the National Curriculum objectives, using local themes wherever possible, to ensure time isn't wasted on learning that isn't prioritised in the National Curriculum over that which is.
- Blocks of lessons are not tied to terms or half-terms but are as short, or long, as needed to deliver the required content, allowing more flexibility with timetabling.
- Differentiation will be used when needed, not as a default setting, and will contribute with child choice to ensure it works for all children.
- Clear focus on retention of key information to prepare all learners for the next step in their education, enhanced by the repetition built into our curriculum for those learners that need it and time to broaden and deepen understanding for those more able learners.
- Themes revisit, repeat and build upon prior knowledge in a strategically planned repeating curriculum.
- Low stakes 'Pop' quizzes are used flexibly (but regularly) to assess acquired knowledge and help revisit learning.
- Learning is put in context as often as possible, especially with 'where' and 'when'.
- Contextual vocabulary will be taught and also woven into all topics and subjects to help build the breadth and depth of vocabulary our children are comfortable using.
- While children are taught key content in line with the National Curriculum, they also have the opportunity to investigate aspects that interest them within topics where appropriate.

Research tells us that the following is important within a curriculum:

- Cognitive load theory
- Over-learning
- Contextualisation
- Semantic versus episodic learning - Not relying on WOW moments which the children remember over the learning.
- Child-led (or to a degree controlled) learning leads to higher investment.

Our curriculum focuses around:

- A single year repeating curriculum approach to learning in most subjects at most times.
- This approach allows pupils in mixed age classes to be taught according to their ability and current learning needs, while still having opportunity to learn all the objects required for their age.
- To effectively deliver this, lessons vary in approach depending on the subject, lesson, section of lesson and style of learning required.
- These approaches include:
 1. Whole class learning where all pupils follow the same learning trajectory (with additional support and/or challenge as appropriate).

2. Upper Year Group (UYG) and Lower Year Group (LYG) approach for all or part of the lesson (but again with additional support and/or challenge as appropriate and with some children accessing the task for the other year group depending on their learning needs / ability).
 3. A chilli challenge approach to differentiation, which is especially used for skills type learning activities.
- Single year repeating approach to maths is well embedded and has seen considerable success in maths attainment and progress (using commercial textbooks and resources as appropriate to support staff workload).
 - Rainbow Grammar throughout the school as the key way we teach the technical aspects of writing and grammar.
 - Trips are invaluable to enrich the curriculum experience and they will either visit the same place each year (allowing much broadening and deepening of their understanding in the second year and allow UYG pupils to access more complex materials and resources at the second visit) or alternate between two similar venues to allow different stimulus around the same topic area.

Our assessment and tracking uses:

- Sharing Standards assessment of writing for Year 1-6 annually.
- Termly tests to establish test performance.
- Insight to collect key objective performance and report progress to parents. Encourage use of it to assess success of planning / teaching.
- Book bands, times table scores and spelling ages tracked to look at other measures of performance.

To make most effective use of staff time:

- Teams plan together and share planning workload across the team.
- Team meetings alternate with staff meetings to provide teams with time to meet and assess children and inform future planning.
- Staff have a choice of planning templates to support different structures within lessons as required (these are not mandated by school though).
- Marking uses minimal writing from staff to gain greatest results from least time used.
- Assessment is used minimally for the greatest possible impact.

What some of these principles look like in lessons

Repeating curriculum

The school has returned to the National Curriculum documents to completely redesign a novel approach to curriculum within mixed age teaching.

This approach builds on our Maths curriculum which has followed this model using chilli challenges for nearly 10 years with very successful outcomes for pupils.

Over-learning is a critical principle in the success of this approach. The rapid exposure to objectives in the Lower Year Groups (LYG) and return to concepts in the Upper Year Groups (UYG) rapidly builds progress ensuring good progress in the LYGs and accelerated progress in UYGs. (Pop quizzes – see below- are also a critical part of this principle.)

The general principle of our curriculum is that pupils are taught *all* objectives for *both* year groups *each* year. The first year is introducing them to the objectives and completing simple objectives. The second year is reinforcing previous learning, allowing reinforcement, refinement of easier objectives, completing the learning of more complex concepts and understanding and allow broadening and deepening of learning in areas.

There are two broad models for this approach.

1. 'Maths' approach where broadly the same lesson is taught each year with children accessing different levels of difficulty each year depending on their ability.
2. 'English' approach where pupils are taught the same learning objectives but using different materials (e.g. the books studied).

Some subjects lend themselves more to one model than the other however both these models may be used in any subjects. Additionally, some subjects, such as PE, may lend themselves to a more traditional alternating approach (though, in reality, this is often broadly similar to the 'English' model as the same skills are studied in different sports.)

Within lessons, staff will use a mix of the approaches outlined on page 1 to ensure the most effective use of lesson time. This may mean a whole class input followed by chilli challenges for the pupils to complete or a mixed approach where children have LYG and UYG direct teaching and work to complete within a lesson or a lesson may have a whole class input and activity with resources provided to scaffold or support the less able learners and more complex outcomes available for the more able learners.

The single year approach to learning also allows staff to be much more familiar with the content they are teaching and allows them to tweak and improve their lesson planning annually leading to faster improvements in the quality of teaching due to greater familiarity. This therefore improves teaching while reducing workload.

Cognitive load theory

Staff have had training on Cognitive Load Theory and understanding how it impacts on learning within the classroom.

All teams plan blocks of learning with opportunities to recap and use the retrieval of information into the working memory to help build links between learning and increase the ability of children to make links, use information previously taught within new blocks of learning. This reduces the overloading of children's working memory when teaching new information.

Staff ensure blocks of learning minimise overloading the working memory.

Every class has at least a working wall for maths and English to help with recapping and using previous learning within future lessons.

Contextualisation

In line with Cognitive Load Theory, children should be helped to make links between different areas of study, either over time or within and between different topics.

This is greatly enhanced by contextualising as much information as possible in lessons.

This could be through vocabulary, which is linked to words they use or experiences familiar with them wherever possible and getting them to use (and return) to these words regularly over time rather than exposing them once and then moving on.

Or this could be through the concepts of where and when events occurred. To help this, each class has a map and a timeline as a display in their classroom. These are dynamic displays that are referenced whenever possible and also link with the topics taught in other year groups so children can build links between past and future learning within the references of where and when.

Semantic versus episodic learning

We believe that well-taught lessons with great behaviour for learning and contextualised information are the most effective way of building engagement with learning and helping children make the most of their time in school.

'Wow' lessons are a risky proposition. They can lead to greater excitement and investment in learning for some children but they also run the risk that children remember the event and not the learning.

To this end we build a clear pattern of blocks of learning that use trips, external providers within school and lessons designed to build engagement sparingly with the main focus on lessons that provide solid learning opportunities that reference the previous engaging sessions and build on that knowledge.

There is a lot of further information on these principles within this article, [Memory not memories – teaching for long term learning – primarytimerydotcom](#)

Child-led (or to a degree controlled) learning leads to higher investment

While letting children select all elements of their learning is not an effective use of time outside of EYFS, we do feel that children taking some control over their learning is vital to build positive learning attitudes within our children.

To this end, Chilli Challenges are used where appropriate (not in every lesson) across school. The basic concept is that three levels of differentiation are provided to the children and they then choose which one

will best suit them for that lesson. The teacher's role moves from dictating how difficult the work is each child does (which can often lead to inadvertent mismatches) to guiding children's choices.

Other options can include a set of criteria that the child might want to use in writing and they then select which to use when or having different apparatus so children can access the same piece of work with or without concrete or pictorial devices to support their learning, amongst many others.

SEND pupils

Specialist provision and in class provision for SEND pupils

Feedback

Please see the feedback policy for further information.

We think that the best learning uses regular feedback from the pupils to the teacher so they can adapt the lesson and also uses as much verbal or written feedback within (or straight after) lessons to allow children to adapt their learning and improve their work.

Written marking away from the point of teaching has little use and anything more than an acknowledgement by the staff is often a waste of their time and has little to no impact upon the child's learning.

Teams should ensure they use pre- and post-teach sessions on a regular basis to ensure any child found in the lesson not to make the expected progress is catching that up and staying with their peers. Pre-teach should be used when the teacher knows a group or individual needs some priming before the lesson to ensure they can access the content to be taught and stay with their peers. Post-teach should be used when a teacher has seen something in the lesson, perhaps at the end in a plenary or summary, and needs to correct it.

Pop quizzes are a key device, especially in lessons other than maths and English, to establish the levels of understanding of content taught or to be taught and to also revisit and remind pupils of previous learning. They should be short but capturing key information children should know. Teams can either plan them into their planning for each subject or can make them up. The results do not need to be recorded.