



Simonside Primary School
Curriculum Implementation Policy
Reviewed October 2025

Rationale

Our expectation is that all pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of pupil achievement. This policy outlines the elements of daily practice which are key to raising and maintaining standards in teaching and learning. Our approach to implementing the curriculum is underpinned by the cognitive science of how children learn and evidence-based research. It applies the findings of cognitive science to daily classroom practice. Learning takes place when episodic, semantic and procedural knowledge has transferred to Long Term Memory. 'Making learning stick' is our aim at Simonside. This policy will outline how we do this.

Aims of the Curriculum

- Provide a broad and balanced education for all pupils.
- Enable pupils to develop knowledge, understand concepts and acquire skills, and be able to choose and apply these in relevant situations.
- Support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Support pupils' physical development and responsibility for their own health, and enable them to be active.
- Promote a positive attitude towards learning.
- Ensure equal access to learning, with high expectations for every pupil and appropriate levels of challenge and support.
- Promote the learning and development of our youngest children and ensure they are ready for Key Stage 1.
- Prepare KS2 children for transition into KS3.
- Provide pupils with the knowledge and understanding needed to maintain emotional well-being and good mental health.
- Ensure pupils know how to stay safe.
- Ensure that pupils know their Rights and British Values and can use these to live their lives as responsible people.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the [National Curriculum programmes of study](#), which all maintained schools in England must teach. It also covers the requirements of the Revised EYFS statutory framework 2025 for our Nursery and Reception children.

It reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014](#) and [Equality Act 2010](#), and refers to curriculum-related

expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's [Governance Handbook](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Body (LGB)

The LGB will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the Headteacher to account for its implementation.

The LGB will also ensure that:

A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets.

Enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the National Curriculum and other statutory requirements.

Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements.

It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum.

It fulfils its role in processes to disapply pupils from all or part of the National Curriculum, where appropriate, and in any subsequent appeals.

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met.

The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the LGB.

Where appropriate, the individual needs of some pupils are met by permanent or temporary disapplication from all or part of the National Curriculum.

They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate.

The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements.

The LGB is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum.

The LGB is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions.

Appropriate provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEND.

Teaching staff

Teaching staff will ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy. Subject leaders will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the curriculum for their subject.

School Curriculum Drivers

The whole of our curriculum for our children from Nursery to Year 6 is infused by four main drivers. These have been chosen by staff and Governors to reflect the specific needs of our children:

1. Emotional Intelligence (How does the Curriculum provide for mental well-being?)

We strive to teach children how to recognise and manage their emotions in response to a wide range of scenarios and possible stress factors. We are committed to raising awareness of the importance of mental health and how to maintain good mental wellbeing.

2. Dreams (Aspirations)

We aim for children to have high expectations of themselves and to 'dream, believe and achieve' (school motto). We aim for children to be socially mobile and have the skills and knowledge to be whatever they would like to be. This also requires the need to widen horizons and experiences so that children have a full understanding of what they *could* do.

3. Knowledge and Understanding of the World (Cultural Capital)

This needs to be a significant focus. Many children experience significant socio-economic deprivation and this often results in extremely limited knowledge and understanding of the world due to limited opportunities. Early Years practitioners place particular emphasis on this in their topic areas, taking opportunities to widen and deepen learning experiences.

4. Rights of the Child How does your curriculum reflect the culture, climate and values of your school?

As a Rights Respecting School (Gold Award) we instil the values associated with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. This is embedded into our school ethos and School Charter. Reference to, and teaching on, the Rights is made throughout all teaching as appropriate including assemblies and through play. Play is a vital part of our curriculum through which opportunities are planned for children to understand how to respect rights.

[See the *Rights Respecting Policy* for the wide range of ways in which this Driver influences our curriculum.]

Planning and Organisation

(A) KEY ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Expectations of children will be high at all times.

Cognitive science tells us that humans find thinking difficult. This does not mean that we lower our expectations of what children can achieve. Rather, we put into place measures which will reduce extraneous cognitive load so that children can focus their thinking and not be distracted by redundant information.

2. Knowledge and Understanding of the World ('Cultural Capital') is vital for children to make progress from novice to expert.

This is a **school curriculum driver**. Due to the socio-economic backgrounds of the majority of our children, it is recognised that school needs to play a significant role in improving children's knowledge and understanding of the world. To this end, we place huge emphasis on teaching vocabulary (words should be taught and not 'caught'). A strategic and consistent approach is taken to ensure that children in each year group learn 400 words a year. Each class also has a 'canon of works': challenging texts that children are exposed to. A longitudinal approach (daily drip-feeding) is taken to teaching certain aspects of geography and science e.g. names of plants, location of countries. Opportunities are also provided for children to learn about the world through play. Play is an essential part of our curriculum and a subject in itself.

3. Desirable difficulty is key to cementing success and providing appropriate challenge.

Cognitive science tells us that we need to ensure children have 80% success in their work and 20% challenge. Increasing this level of challenge can result in low self-esteem, poor behaviour for learning and no transference of knowledge from working memory to long-term memory.

4. Teaching needs to make links between the Long Term Memory and Short Term Memory.

Teachers are trained in how to use the 'Episodic Buffer' in order to bring knowledge from Long Term Memory to simulate new information. Knowledge Organisers are used to frame learning in context.

(B) CURRICULUM DESIGN

Simonside Primary school uses the Chris Quigley Essentials Package as a basis for the curriculum, which in turn is based on the statutory 2014 Curriculum. For each subject area of the curriculum, teachers use the following:

Breadth of Study: This lists the statutory content of the curriculum which needs to be covered for each Key Stage. This content has been grouped to create topics for each year group. The varied content of each topic is designed to provide **breadth of learning** for each child.

Concepts: These underpin all teaching and are therefore repeated over and over again with each topic providing a different context. This is designed to provide **depth** to children's learning.

Milestones: These are the 'end goal' for each 2 year phase. Within each Milestone children will be at one of three levels: Basic, Advancing or Deep. **The focus is on Longitudinal learning.** (This also gives a framework for assessment so we can track children's achievements). The style of teaching used for each of these levels will be matched to the ability level; ranging from intensive instruction and modelling, to independent tasks followed by immediate feedback, to discovery learning.

Characteristics: These reflect our **high expectations** of what we wish children to be able to do.

How have you decided on the breadth of experiences you provide?

Class teachers/phase teams/phase leaders work in collaboration to produce Long Term Plans which ensure full coverage of the curriculum. In addition, further topics/areas of study are incorporated in order to meet the specific needs of children in our school. These are heavily influenced by the school curriculum drivers. From the Long Term Plans, teachers create Medium Term Topic Plans which are designed to teach full schemas of knowledge. These are built up by trying to make links between subject areas where possible. Episodic learning is incorporated e.g. educational visits, playtime activities, visitors to school. These are designed to 'hook' children's interest, make memories, and fill gaps in knowledge and understanding. (However, the long-term learning limitations of episodic learning is accounted for by staff.) The Rights of the Child, British Values and Staying Safe are all incorporated into planning.

EYFS

The curriculum planning for EYFS is necessarily different however follows the same ethos with our chosen school curriculum drivers at its core. The 'Milestones' equivalent are the age banded Development Matters statements from the EYFS non-guidance framework and ultimately work towards the Early Learning Goals to be achieved by the end of Reception year in the EYFS statutory framework. Key concepts/ learning objectives are taken from 7 key areas of learning covering the whole curriculum. Staff use the development matters statements from across the areas to plan topic webs that have a thoroughly cross curricular approach.

Reducing Extraneous Cognitive Load

Which innovations have you pioneered in designing your curriculum?

A whole school approach is taken in implementing teaching ideas which are designed to reduce cognitive load (so children can learn more), widen knowledge of vocabulary, and improve knowledge and understanding of the world.

1. *Rural and urban story settings.*

Each class 'adopts' two story settings: one urban; one rural. E.g. Hadrian's wall (rural) and Dean Street, Newcastle (urban). These settings are taught in great detail. Children are taught

the geography, geology, history and relevant science in regard to the settings and go on an educational visit to each of them. This gives children two settings which they can use in their writing whenever needed (reducing cognitive load).

In EYFS adults start from the children's own experiences of life and the area in which they live. Nursery children then learn about the wider world through carefully planned themes linked to stories. Reception children learn about their own environment and then about another 2 contrasting environments of Africa and the Arctic. They then make comparisons between them.

Over the primary phase, the cultural capital and vocabulary will accumulate so that by Y6 children have a large 'bank' of knowledge from which to choose ideas and be creative.

2. Four-clock classrooms.

Rather than trying to teach children to tell the time in a block of teaching in maths lessons, teachers 'drip feed' knowledge and understanding of how to tell the time and calculate time differences. KS2 classes have a 'Four clock display'. This consists of: a 12hr analogue matched with a 12 digital clock; and a 24hr analogue matched with a 24hr digital clock. Teachers refer to these four clocks regularly during the day. In KS1, children learn to tell the time on an analogue and then a digital clock. These classes have a 12hr analogue clock and a 12hr digital clock on display which can be referred to regularly throughout the day. Within EYFS, teachers focus on the language of time and familiarising children with matching events in the day to the likely time these events would happen.

3. Class Dashboard.

These are adapted for each year group but essentially include daily information about the weather and the date. E.g. KS2 classes may add degrees Celsius and Fahrenheit so that children can relate their feeling of how cold or warm it is with actual measurement. KS1 classes may focus more on the four seasons and the changes we see in the weather, hours of light etc. EYFS classes concentrate on the day of the week, months of the year and daily weather.

4. Leaf/plant of the day.

Each class will display a leaf or plant (real or an image) of the day in order to familiarise children with their characteristics. The aim is to fill an identified gap in knowledge and thus enable children to access all other subjects which 'call' on this information e.g. science, geography, reading comprehension.

5. Extreme weather around the world.

A large map of the world is displayed in each classroom. In KS2 classes an extreme weather event is researched, discussed and located on the map. In KS1 the focus is more on location and enabling children to identify continents, oceans, seas and countries. In EYFS a globe is used to locate land and sea and to find the country where we live and compare it with other countries we experience through topics taught. e.g. which animals live in the Arctic and which animals live in Africa.

6. 4 characters per year group.

Children in each year group 'adopt' four characters: a 'good' adult, a 'bad' adult, a 'good' child, and a 'bad' child. This is in the crude context of 'goodies' and 'baddies'. The focus is on the behaviour not the person. The teaching on these characters is intensive (they can be referred to in PHSCE social stories for example) so that children are able to move from character description to actual characterisation. Over the primary phase, children build up a bank of characters they can use, thus reducing cognitive load.

7. Canon of works.

In order to keep expectations high and manage 'desired difficulty' a canon of works is carefully taught in each year group. This reading list includes texts that children may struggle to read for pleasure or independently e.g. they may include archaic language, complex plot structures, symbolic text or resistant text (e.g. poetry).

Knowledge and Skills

For each subject area within a topic plan, teachers identify what it is that they wish children to learn – what it is that they really need to 'make stick'. Key questions are devised, recorded and shared with children so that class teachers, subject co-ordinators and senior leaders can monitor and assess learning. This is done within a Knowledge Organiser. Children can also self-assess their learning. These key questions are used some time after the topic has been taught in order to assess transference from working memory to long term memory.

Subject leaders are responsible for ensuring skills progression in their subject. They equip class teachers with a skills progression framework to be used in building schemas of understanding. It is recognised that transference from working memory to procedural long term memory requires plenty of practice.

(C) LESSONS (What does daily practice look like?)

All lessons in our school should include the following key elements to ensure high quality teaching and learning. Teachers will receive support and CPD opportunities to ensure they fully understand these elements and to enable them to embed these strategies in their everyday practice.

All lessons have clear objectives and success criteria:

- Learning objectives are shared orally and displayed in child friendly language. They are written as a learning question.
- The objectives are placed in context (activating prior knowledge thereby simulating long term knowledge with new material).
- Objectives will be related to key concepts and this will be shared with children as appropriate (but teachers are clear on how the current lesson fits in teaching key concepts).

- Success criteria are displayed for the children to follow during the lesson or are drawn up with the children.
- When appropriate children use the success criteria to self-assess their own or their partner's work.
- Children are reminded of the success criteria during the lesson – often children's work is used to illustrate the success criteria in action.

All lessons are clearly differentiated to enable all pupils to access learning and be challenged:

- All learners are challenged appropriately. We aim for 80% success and 20% challenge.
- We want all our children to access the same learning and it is through differentiation and resources/support materials that we support less able children.

All pupils are actively engaged in learning:

- Pupils are actively engaged during all parts of the lesson. Teachers take into account children's concentration span and ensure pupils are not sitting passively. Teachers use a variety of stimuli in lessons creatively in order to engage learners: variation in voice, teacher/pupil movement, sound clips, video clips, visual information, variation in tasks and oracy tools.
- Dual coding is used whenever possible: visual representation with audio explanation; busy-ness on the smartboard or surrounding area is kept to a minimum. This is to reduce extraneous cognitive load.
- Opportunities for the children to discuss with their peers are a regular feature in all lessons (e.g. use of Talk Partners). Pupils are trained to use appropriate body language when engaged in discussion with a partner.
- Mini whiteboards are used for short bursts of activity, to develop understanding and to ensure children are active and engaged during the lesson.
- ICT is used to enhance learning wherever possible.

All pupils receive regular and clear feedback which enhances learning:

- Assessment for Learning and effective marking is embedded in everyday practice and is used to inform teaching and learning.
- All pupils are clear about how they need to improve.
- Pupils are regularly given time to respond to feedback in their books. Teaching does not move on until misconceptions/errors have been addressed.

Learning is enhanced through the effective use of additional adults:

- Additional adults are clearly directed to support learning.
- Teaching assistants are fully engaged with pupils on the carpet and at tables during lesson time. They are not photocopying work, sharpening pencils, or sticking work into books during learning time.
- They are clear about who they are supporting and why.
- Planning is shared in advance with teaching assistants.

- They sit next to the pupil/pupils they are working with, quietly engaging the pupils, explaining the task or using other resources, e.g. a number line to facilitate learning.
- They are involved in assessing pupils' understanding, recording observations and feeding assessment to the teacher.

Lesson Structure

Lessons are made up of four main elements:

1. Set the scene, place learning in a wider context, link to prior learning, review previous learning, provide the 'big picture', share objectives and learning outcomes.
2. Pupils are taught new information (instruction/exposition).
3. Pupils make sense of information (processing/understanding).
4. Review information and plan next steps.

In order to incorporate all four elements we plan '6 phases of a lesson':

Connect 	Explain 	Example 	Attempt 	Apply 	Challenge 
Activate prior learning	Instruct vocabulary Explain core concepts	High-quality modelling Explicit direct instruction (My turn)	Guided practice Gradually reduce scaffold (Our turn)	Independent practice Application of new concept (Your turn)	Deepen understanding Sophisticate thinking



The phases are not always sequential. Good teachers give lots of opportunity for children to assimilate and rehearse new information before applying it.

"It is not enough simply to present students with new material, because the material will be forgotten unless there is sufficient rehearsal. An important finding from information-processing research is that students need to spend additional time rephrasing, elaborating, and summarising new material in order to store this material in their long term memory. When the rehearsal time is too short, students are less able to store, remember, or use the material...it is relatively easy to place something in a filing cabinet, but it can be very difficult to recall where exactly we placed it. Rehearsal helps us remember where we filed it, so we can access it with ease when needed." (Rosenshine).

Teaching and learning are not the same thing. While inextricably linked, they are separate processes. This must be reflected in the lesson.

Create an appropriate working atmosphere:

- Create a classroom environment that is stimulating, reassuring and organised.
- Be fully prepared for the lesson.
- Ensure resources are prepared and on tables in advance of lessons.
- Other adults engage sensitively with any pupils who are not ready to learn.
- Greet pupils with a smile!

Link the lesson to prior learning:

- Link the lesson to prior knowledge, e.g. reviewing previous lesson;
Think about the three important things you learnt in the last lesson – now tell your partner.
In two minutes I am going to ask you what you learnt last lesson. You may talk to your partner if you wish.
Today's lesson is about the water cycle. Jot down what you already know. Work in pairs.

Provide an overview:

- The brain is more likely to absorb details when it can place them within a wider context. Use topic maps, learning journeys or learning maps to achieve this.

Share learning intentions with the pupils:

- Pupils must know exactly what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. For learning intentions to be shared effectively, teachers must:
- Move away from saying, 'Today we are doing...' and instead say, 'By the end of the lesson you will all know/be able to/understand....'
- Make learning intentions specific.
- Use child-friendly language.
- Refer to them at the start of the lesson and during the lesson.

New information is delivered in many ways:

- Exposition
- Audi-visual aids e.g. video clips
- Diagrams, pictures
- Internet/ICT
- Demonstration
- Modelling
- Books

The input phase needs to be punctuated with questions:

- Ask regular closed questions during the input. This will keep pupils alert and provide instant feedback as to whether they have heard correctly and have understood – although at a shallow level. Asking too many open questions during an explanation can easily take a lesson off on inappropriate tangents. It also allows an individual to take the lesson off in a direction that causes other students to lose their train of thought.
- Ask open questions before and/or after an input. Poising an open question at the start of an explanation will prime the brain to notice detail and begin to form an answer, even at a subconscious level, during the input. Asking an open question at the end of an input develops and assesses deeper understanding.

Making sense of information (processing/understanding).

It is adults who help pupils make sense of information. The frequency and nature of interactions between teacher and pupils is highly significant. We develop understanding by:

- Using open ended questions
- Providing wait time – pupils need time to think through their answers before replying.
- Providing thinking time by giving advance warning, such as ‘In two minutes I am going to ask you...’
- Allowing pupils to explore and articulate their thinking by giving them time to discuss their responses in pairs or groups or through ‘nesting’.
- Ensuring pupils fully understand the question by asking them to say it back or rephrase it.
- Extending and deepening understanding by asking follow-up questions such as ‘What made you think that?’
- Asking pupils to identify three possible answers and then select the best one (so they don’t always give you the first answer that pops into their head).
- Scaffolding thinking and answering.
- Providing ‘Golden sentences’ for children to complete. These are three identical sentence stems followed by a different conjunction:
A fraction is the same as a percentage because...
A fraction is the same as a percentage but...
A fraction is the same as a percentage so...

Review information and plan next steps.

When teachers summarise what has been learned, the effect on pupils’ memories is relatively insignificant. However, when the pupils themselves identify what they have learnt as their lesson draws to a close, their memories will be given a significant boost. Always refer back to the learning objective and success criteria.

Inclusion

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

More knowledgeable pupils

Pupils with low prior attainment

Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

Pupils with SEND

Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities can study every National Curriculum subject, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEND policy.

Monitoring Arrangements

Governors monitor coverage of National Curriculum subjects and compliance with other statutory requirements through:

- *Learning Walks*
- *Pupil Book Studies*
- *Pupil interviews*
- *Subject-coordinator/SLT interviews*
- *Subject- coordinator/SLT reports*
- *SLT-led work scrutinies*

Subject leaders/SLT monitor the way subjects are taught throughout the school by:

- *Learning walks*
- *Pupil Book Studies*
- *Lesson observations*
- *Team meetings*
- *Moderation meetings*

- *Work scrutiny*
- *Pupil interviews*