



Our Curriculum at Simonside Primary School

Our Mission:

For every child to have breadth, depth and enjoyment in learning.

Our Vision:

Our school motto, 'Dream, Believe, Achieve', underpins our desire to ensure that all of our children can reach their full potential. We strive to provide a rich, vibrant curriculum which stimulates the children's interest, offers challenge to all, and supports where appropriate; making learning fun.

Intent

Breadth, Depth and Life Skills

At Simonside Primary School, we are committed to providing a curriculum which ensures breadth and depth of understanding across all subjects and equips our children with the life skills needed for future learning (including transition to the next phase), employment and mental and physical well-being.

Cultural Capital

We aim to empower our children with 'Cultural Capital' and rich vocabulary which they can utilise to achieve ever greater depth in their understanding.

About Rights, Through Rights, For Rights

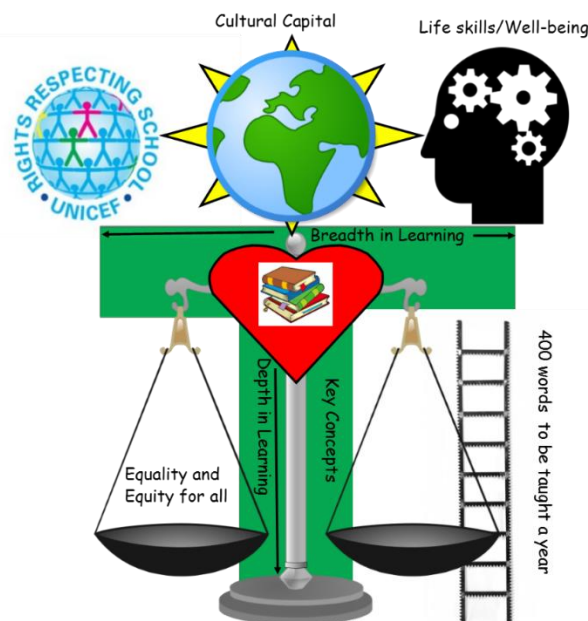
As a Rights Respecting school we believe that children should be taught about rights and through rights, supporting them to develop their own self-esteem and to live as responsible citizens.

Learn to read, read to learn

Reading is at the core of our curriculum and, as such, we aim to excite and enthuse our children with a love of reading. Reading pervades all topic maps.

Key Concepts

Our 'concept led' curriculum is driven by key concepts which are repeatedly taught through a wide range of carefully sequenced topics. Knowledge and skills are taught in progressive milestones using the principles of cognitive science to ensure attainment and accurate assessment.



What Drives Our Curriculum?

1. Emotional Intelligence



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



This is 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



As a Rights Respecting School (Silver status) we instil the values associated with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. This is embedded into our school ethos and whole/ class charters. Reference to, and teaching on, the Rights is made throughout all teaching as appropriate including assemblies, break times, by all duty bearers including lunchtime supervisors at dinner times.

Implementation

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 are read by all children. A longitudinal approach (daily drip-feeding) is taken to teaching certain aspects of geography and science e.g. names of plants, location of countries.

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. Learning Journeys and Schema Webs are used to frame learning in context.

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:

Opportunities: 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.

Key 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.

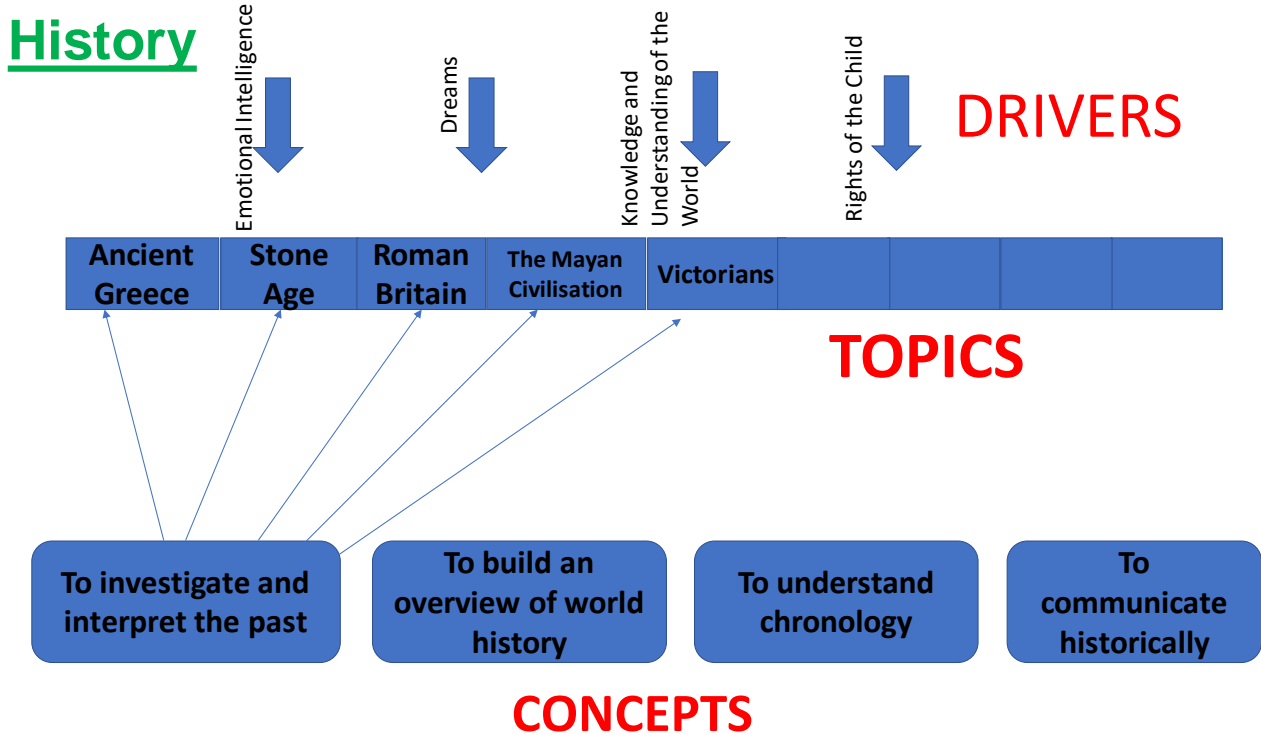
Milestones: These are the 'end goal' for each 2-year phase. Within each Milestone children will be at one of three levels: Basic, Advancing or Deep. **The focus is on Longitudinal learning.** (This also gives a framework for assessment so we can track children's achievements). The style of teaching used 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.

Long Term Plans are created for each year group which ensure **full coverage of the curriculum and strategic sequencing.** 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 Webs 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, visitors to school. These are designed to 'hook' children's interest, make memories, and fill gaps in knowledge and understanding. **The Rights of the Child, British Values and Staying Safe are all incorporated into planning.**

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 statutory framework and ultimately the Early Learning Goals to be achieved by the end of Reception year. 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.

Illustration of how the curriculum for a subject is taught. Key concepts repeatedly taught through a range of topics giving breadth and depth in learning.



Reducing Extraneous Cognitive Load

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 digit 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).

Impact

We monitor and evaluate the impact of the curriculum design and implementation on teaching and learning.

Lesson Observations/Learning Walks

Lessons are observed through a range of lenses:

1. **Assessment** - Teachers are highly skilled in finding out what pupils know, can do and how well they understand aspects of the curriculum. They use this carefully to plan learning activities and, as a result, pupils learn deeply over time.
2. **Checking** - Are children learning? What can they recall? Teachers understand the need to check that pupils are benefitting from their input and activities.
3. **Feedback/Marking** - How do children know what they can do and what they need to develop? Is sufficient time and support given to making improvements?
4. **Teaching** - How well do teachers understand the art of teaching, including methods, pupil groupings, explanations, questioning, resources, learning environment, pacing and relationships?
5. **Basic skills** - How well do teachers promote and reinforce at every opportunity the use of the basic skills of literacy, communication and numeracy?
6. **Attitudes** - How well are the attitudes to learning and the standards of behaviour that reflect the culture and climate of the school reinforced?
7. **Progress** - What is the rate of progress for different groups of pupils?

Book Monitoring

Teaching and learning can be tracked through the teaching of key concepts ensuring progression. Work is also monitored for appropriate challenge, attitudes to learning and effective sequencing.

Pupil Interviews

Pupils from different groups (EAL, SEND, PP etc) are asked questions regarding their learning experiences and their recall of key information.