

Spring enquiries

Enquiries into practice are a continual feature of the work of the Trust. They are a primary means by which we experience one another's work, share our ideas, problems and solutions and calibrate the quality of what we offer our pupils. Those people who have attended an enquiry at another school always relate their experience in glowing terms: it does seem that there is no more powerful arena for professional learning than being immersed in a school for a day and be invited to grapple with its most pressing priorities with a group of similarly minded professionals.

The Spring enquiries have been orchestrated and led by senior leaders within the Trust and - for the first time - pursued a common theme. Each school has hosted a focus on their work to reform and revise the curriculum. The reports that emerge from this process are of high quality and will be helpful in guiding the next steps of development. There're also of huge benefit across the whole Trust as we seek to build intelligence, spot patterns and identify promising practice.

We are already seeing developments that place us in a strong position and our pupils are benefiting from a curriculum offer that is broad and deep. Current efforts in all schools is serving to ensure that learning is coherently sequenced, precisely organised and underpinned by a clear understanding of how pupils learn so that they accumulate knowledge and understanding. The work of the subject leader - particularly in relation to curriculum design and evaluation - is emerging as a Trust wide priority.

Trust priorities

Throughout this year the Trust has pursued a small number of key priorities - that match the important work in all academies and reflect the assessment data that we are generating - including **developing the Early Years, improving pupils' reading** and **ensuring that all pupils are challenged** through their learning. We are two years into our focus on developing the curriculum and this provides a natural complement to our priorities and has created a vehicle that connects our strands of work.

Within these priority areas we have: developed subject and area specific teams (in EY, Maths and English), continued to work closely with external partners (like the CLPE who help us to deliver the Power of Reading programme in most schools), arranged a large array of high profile learning events and given a platform to some of the UK's foremost authorities on our areas of priority.

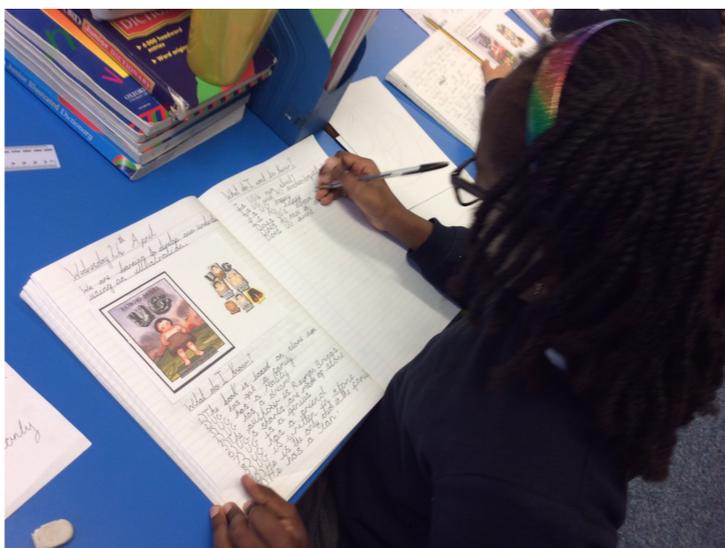
Crucially, the priorities have been reflected in individual academy improvement plans and in the work that members of the Trust central team get involved in each school. The academy improvement plans for this academic year demonstrate a high degree of commonality. This reflects the growing alignment in our schools and adds purpose and precision into our sharing of practice and insight.

Curriculum development

From September 2019 a new Framework for Inspection will be introduced by Ofsted. While this is not yet finalised at the time of writing there is little doubt that there will be a renewed - and broadly welcome - focus on the curriculum.

For the last year or so this has been a key priority for the Trust - we've dedicated a huge amount of leadership time and energy in this direction since 2017 - and it does appear that our efforts have not been misplaced. In all academies we are witnessing a thoughtful, reflective and urgent emphasis on designing the curriculum intent and refining approaches to implementation. Leaders are sharing their insights and adding value to one another's work.

The Trust retains a commitment to locally determined curriculum in which Principals and their SLTs take a clear lead in determining what is learned and in what sequence. There's a deeply held philosophical backdrop to this but it's also a pragmatic move. Having each academy design and develop its own approach - within a broad framework offered by the Trust and with appropriate levels of oversight and co-ownership - means that professionals have higher levels of engagement in their work and that pupils benefit from a bespoke curriculum that is designed to match their needs and interests. In turn, it's evident that teachers and other professionals are relishing the agency of deciding how to deliver the curriculum in ways that build lasting knowledge. Leaders at all levels are sharing with us their appreciation that having a strong understanding of the curriculum aids their ability to challenge, support colleagues and secure ever greater quality for pupils.



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CEO reflections

John Hattie's Visible Learning ranks as being one of the most impactful publications of recent years. Put simply, it has had a profound affect on education systems across the globe and in a real sense has influenced what children experience in every one of our classrooms. If you've thought hard about how to give a child feedback on their learning today, it's a fair bet that this has been influenced by John.

Hattie looks at the effect sizes of the pedagogical and curricular choices we make for our pupils and guides us to identify those practices where there is a clear and well evidenced impact on pupil learning. That the work still resonates, over 10 years since its first publication, affirms its underlying validity (even though we might quibble with some of his conclusions a decade down the line). John points out that those classrooms that combine high quality feedback with challenging tasks that require pupils to think deeply, apply their knowledge and solve problems are likely to be fertile places to learn.

Hattie's most recent work focuses on Collective Teacher Efficacy. This relates to how all those working with pupils understand how they collectively contribute over time to improve learning and achievement. When teams of educators believe that they have the agency to make a difference to all pupils - and especially the most disadvantaged - then extraordinary things can happen. Hattie suggests that this development, above all others, is the single most powerful thing we can seek to do. It resonates for me because it's what we witness across the Trust every day.

(For more information please read <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar18/vol75/num06/The-Power-of-Collective-Efficacy.aspx>)

Reading

Those who know Simon Smith (personally or virtually) will know he's a bit keen on reading and has a passion for children's literature. He has overseen a recent renaissance at East Whitby and books lie at the heart of this. Simon has provided some useful guidance on developing reading in classrooms.

Among Simon's suggestions are:

- Talk with pupils about books
- Read to them every day
- Create environments that are language rich
- Explicitly teach challenging vocabulary
- Enable children to learning be heart a range of stories, poems and rhymes (and doing stop doing this when children reach KS2)
- Use drama to explore the deeper aspects of texts
- Make classroom reading areas brilliant and allow everyday access to high quality books

Go to this site for more a more expansive exploration of these ideas on this theme; www.bbc.com/teach/live-lessons/why-dont-our-children-love-to-read-facebook-live/zdxmrj6/

If you're one of the 36.7 people in the UK that don't yet follow him on Twitter he can be found at @smithmm. It's usually informative and never dull.

Simon is co-leading the Trust strategy for reading in the next year.

Focus on Keelby

Annabel Cowling is the Principal of Keelby Primary Academy in Lincolnshire and she is obsessed with the curriculum. To support the school's commitment to create outstanding learning for children she has taken a lead in redesigning the curriculum with her colleagues at school. This means spending hours sifting content, mulling over potential themes and pouring over a wide range of resources. It also means being immersed in professional literature and research.

She's driven by a sense of dissatisfaction with their previous - successful - approach. "We found that the children were remembering the experience rather than retaining the core knowledge that they'll need to secure success in future." Once complete pupils at Keelby will benefit from a " progressive sequence of subject knowledge and concepts that build over time," Annabel in unequivocal: "Knowledge will be taught to be remembered."

The curriculum focuses on subject disciplines individually taught across the whole school each term. For example, in Autumn term 1 the whole school are studying a history unit as the main focus, while Autumn 2 is Geography. In the Spring term Art and History take centre stage. In the latter half of the Summer Annabel has chosen to retain some flexibility for review and consolidation of the knowledge acquired during the rest of the year. This allows for revisiting key concepts and knowledge to ensure they are secure. There will also be a transition project built into this term so that knowledge and concepts learnt can easily be specifically shared and built on as they progress through the school.

As the leadership team determine the *what* of the curriculum, Annabel is looking forward to working with staff to focus on the pedagogical *how*. Teacher agency is crucial here and those working at Keelby will be using their expertise to ensure that pupils learning is powerful and deep. AVP Steve Claybourne - who also teaches Year 6 - explains that, "It'll then be down to us to concentrate on task design and delivery that will engage and challenge all children."

Assessment

The Trust implementation of a shared approach to data collection is almost complete (although refinements and improvements will be ongoing as we respond to suggestions and ideas for advanced functionality. The SIMS based solution enables teachers to have an accurate overview of pupil attainment so they can deliver great lessons that advance pupil progress. Leaders have an accurate overview of the learning of individuals, groups and cohorts.

Elliston Academy were an early adopter of the system. Caroline Patterson (Principal) is quick to point to the benefits of keeping abreast of progress in real time and over longer periods. Live assessments - similar to those commonplace in EY - are now becoming the norm across the school and teachers actively use the insights that emerge from the data.

Colleagues at Elliston have been learning to use the system together and this has meant that people have helped one another. This has been beneficial and - as Caroline explains, "Staff have had a huge number of excellent conversations about learning and assessment that have sharpened our processes and judgements."

Caroline sums it up neatly, "The use of SIMS simplifies the mechanics of data collection and analysis. This creates more time for teachers to complete the day to day assessments that have the greatest impact on learning."



Early Years

A series of enquiries into mathematics provision and pedagogy has taken place in a number of our EY settings. While the details of these sessions will be published and disseminated in the summer, early headlines provide a source of reflection for everybody with a stake in our youngest pupils getting the best possible start to their time in education (that's all of us). Insights from practice at 9 Academies challenge is to consider;

- How we design an RY curriculum that is authenticity connected to that of KS1 and 2
- How mathematical language is use and modelled
- How we identify the small steps of progress that are needed in the acquisition of mathematical knowledge and concepts and then create tasks that drive this learning
- How do we balance fluency, reasoning and problem solving in EY

The EY enquiry programme is continuing across the summer term.

Governance

From September 2019 all the Enquire Learning Trust academies will be governed in a different way. The existing local arrangements will be replaced by an Academy Improvement Committee for a group of schools that share a neighbourhood. This will bring the Trust into line with the latest recommendations from the Regional Schools Commissioner and mean that our most active and effective governors can make a difference to a larger number of pupils and strengthen our internal accountability. The new AICs will carry a sharp focus on leadership, teaching, curriculum and outcomes for pupils.