

DEMAT Principles of the Curriculum and Teaching – “Sit behinds”.

Having worked with staff across our Trust on these key principles, we have put together some further detail which ‘sits behind’ each statement to help us think carefully about what they mean for us in our individual schools. What we have written here is not exhaustive – we could write pages and pages for each one, but we have tried to crystallise some key points to consider for each principle.

1. All DEMAT children are entitled to a knowledge-rich curriculum where knowledge is valued, specified, well-sequenced and taught to be remembered.

SB: We do not leave what children may or may not have the opportunity to learn to chance. We know that knowledge begets knowledge and the ability to make links, think critically and to be creative all stem from knowledge of a given area. If this knowledge is to be carefully built upon, year on year, we cannot leave it to whim or preference. Therefore, we must be very clear about what it is that we want to ensure children know (and can do) and we design our delivery of this to ensure that they not only experience or come across it, but that they remember it. Our curriculum entitlement is for ALL of our children – we do not design a richer curriculum for some than others.

Key questions to ask ourselves:

- When we make changes to any area of the curriculum – how does this impact on future learning? Where may this concept be being built in this subject? In another subject?
- What does progression look like in each subject? Who has ownership? What do staff need to know? How does this work for EYFS?
- How are children with SEND being served? (Adaptations, consistency of formats and routines, task design -thinking about learning rather than activity, removal from for interventions etc.)
- What do our timetables need to look like to provide adequate time for each subject? Are there pragmatic decisions we need to make here? Can/should we be flexible around timetabling/time allocation (not bound by weeks/term-time etc). Are there areas where we could use time better?

2. The curriculum is the progression model, to which all are entitled. It is not left to chance.

SB: If the curriculum is defined as in our first principle, then as a progression model, any assessment of this curriculum must inform us clearly about what it is that children have or haven’t learnt and, furthermore, it must both demand of us and support us to do something about what we know. Formative assessment must be central to lesson design and summative assessment must be as valid as possible (i.e. it tells us

what we think we think it does). Trying to give a child a number or level, for example, for geography over a term doesn’t tell us much about what that child does or doesn’t

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know (or can/can't do) but saying they have learnt the curriculum or not (and where any gaps may be) tells us what we might need to do and places the burden of 'proof' back where it should be: on the curriculum. Again, a well-planned curriculum will allow this to happen as we decide what it is exactly that we must ensure children know and can do in order to progress and to build upon this knowledge. As the curriculum develops for EYFS to Y6, the subject leader must be the custodian of the curricular content and must have an understanding of how well children across the school are learning their subject. Again, the "all" is very important here – how we maintain as much of this as possible for all children, removing barriers, rather than differentiating expectations.

Key questions to ask ourselves:

- How do we teach so that we know what our children have/haven't understood/remembered/learnt? How do we check for this regularly and consistently? How does our teaching facilitate retention?
- What is manageable/useful to record and what is not? (*workload : return on learning* ratio must be high)
- Who holds this information?
- What do we do with any assessment information we collect?
- How does the subject leader know if their progression model is effective?

3. We seek opportunities to ensure that children are taught "powerful knowledge" which takes children beyond their otherwise lived experiences and opens up life choices.

When we think about adapting curriculum for the children we teach, we can get bogged down in "relevance". Michael Young describes powerful knowledge however, as context - independent. It is knowledge that has been built up over centuries and which has been passed on and developed from generation to generation. It is our duty to share this knowledge with our children and not to allow their individual contexts to determine what they are entitled to. This means that children are not limited to the confines of their personal experience but that aspects of the world that might otherwise be unknown are opened up to them. Of course, this also means we must consider prior experience and context if we are to also to specify what we want to emphasise. This does not just mean 'trips' (although it certainly can include trips) but it means the literature, art, science, music etc. that we choose to expose our children to. We must never apologise for what we teach them as we are exposing them to the beauty of what we know about the world around them and allowing them to stand on the shoulders of the giants who have gone before them in story of mankind.

Key questions to ask:

- What knowledge might take our children outside of their everyday lived experiences and open up their world?
- How does our curriculum provide for this? (Here we might consider things like our trips, our reading canon, our composers studied in music, the types of scientists we learn about etc.)
- How does this start in EYFS – do we understand their starting points so we can adapt from there?

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4. Our research-informed pedagogy ensures that what is taught is:

- i. carefully broken down and planned backwards from a clearly defined end-point;
- ii. sequenced so that knowledge is revisited regularly and built upon thoughtfully;
- iii. designed to help pupils to remember, in the long term, the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts;
- iv. respectful of both disciplinary and substantive elements of knowledge within a given subject - these elements are enhanced, never obscured, by cross-curricular links;
- v. tested regularly to ensure that pupils embed and use knowledge fluently or to check understanding and inform teaching.
- vi. **staff training is prioritised to ensure teachers are secure with agreed / codified methods. *new!**

Each subsection here should take considerable unpicking on its own. One thing that must be clear is that, as teachers, we must be mindful of the novice to expert journey, so we begin not with a hope that children will discover something, but with direct instruction which fades to independent application in a carefully structured and responsive teaching sequence. Room for discovery follows a level of understanding. Below are some of the comments from our senior leaders who pulled out key elements to consider:

Point 1 - applies to individual lessons as well as units. Small steps, techniques such as “I do, we do, you do”. Scaffolds such as stem sentences. Always know what you want children to be able to know/say/do by the end of the lesson or unit otherwise we are just planning activities, not learning.

Point 2 - determine the frequency of retrieval practice and be explicit about when and how this takes place. Teacher subject knowledge is important – the importance of specifying and providing this knowledge (e.g. calculation policy in maths but is this replicated in other subjects? How?). Ensure that concepts are taught in the same way across the school. Subject leaders look at examples of work across the year groups to check that knowledge is well-sequenced. How can teachers know (and check) what has gone before (what children should be secure with) and where what they are teaching fits in the bigger curricular picture?

Point 3 - Fidelity to lesson design can be crucial (if using pre-written scheme which has planned for this e.g. Sounds Write). Plan and embed opportunities for retrieval practice. All staff in the classroom need to understand the prerequisite knowledge, core knowledge and where the learning leads to next.

Point 4 - Ensure that knowledge is clear and built into progression documents. Cross-curricular links are made and understood where they benefit and embed learning but not forced. This is also where teachers and subject leaders need to work together, not independently of each other. This ensures cohesion and that SLs are empowered and knowledgeable such that they can support teachers to explore and develop cross-curricular links.

Point 5 – Formative assessment techniques to ensure that misconceptions are addressed swiftly. Any assessment must tell us what we need to know and lead to action. If it doesn't, something isn't working! This

could be the assessment itself or the practice around the assessment. Children are rehearsed in routines that allow them to use their knowledge and discuss it through the lesson sequence. Consider how we might use our knowledge organisers to support this. Plan for likely misconceptions, considering examples (common and abstract) and non-examples. Children need opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways. Teachers (and children!) understand the purpose of their assessments, both formative and summative. Leaders (and other stakeholders e.g. governors/parents) understand what they can and cannot infer from summative data.

Point 6 – This one is new and was added during the latest workshop with school leaders. All staff (including support staff) involved in educating children must be included in training in order that staff teams grow together in building robust, collective practice that is coherent for children and allows staff to develop. CPD should be carefully planned (linking to ADP) and revisited regularly, and implementation monitored, sustained, and embedded. This develops a school culture as a community of learners where training is specific and targeted, creating an ethos in school where staff feel able to ask for support and can receive this support positively. Trust-wide training is crucial to attend so that expertise be developed, and staff supported beyond individual schools.

5. Rigorous, systematic teaching of reading is paramount and includes mastery of the phonic code, automaticity, prosody, fluency, and comprehension. This means that anyone involved in reading instruction must be inducted with the required subject and pedagogical knowledge.

Reading instruction is the most well-researched area of teaching, with an extensive evidence base. The evidence base, however, has not been widely shared across the profession, although this is changing. As we are committed to being evidence-informed in our practice as a Trust, we must ensure that anyone involved in the teaching of reading has the knowledge, skills and resources to teach in the ways that, collectively we have decided are our 'best bets' to ensure that all children leave us as fluent, able readers with positive attitudes towards reading.

Key questions to ask:

- Have we made teaching children to read our highest priority? Is this reflected in operational running of our days? Timetables, general classroom practice, what we communicate to parents/carers etc?
- Have we ensured that we are all clear on what is meant by the terms:
 - Synthetic phonics? Do they understand why we use linguistic phonics and that it sits under the umbrella of a synthetic phonics approach? If not – what could go wrong? Are all staff clear that, without sufficient mastery of the phonic code, children will not be able to read fluently?
 - Automaticity?
 - Prosody?
 - Fluency (and the role automaticity, accuracy, speed, and prosody play)?
 - Comprehension (specifically the role of background knowledge and how comprehension 'skills' are largely not transferable and so time teaching these should be limited and not the main method of instruction)?
- Are there any systems in our schools that could undermine the work we are doing with the rigorous approach to reading we are taking?

6. In all subjects, strong teacher subject knowledge is crucial to a high-quality delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, we must ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge required to ensure coherence and avoid misconceptions.

If we know this to be true, we must make every effort to maximise the potential we have as a Trust. We need to hold high expectations for ourselves as well as the children. This is based on the premise that we can all improve our practice, not because we are not good enough, but because we can all be better. There is much more potential for us to do this as a large body than in individual schools. The DEMAT playbook clearly sets out expectations for participation in Trust CPD.

Of particular difficulty for us, as primary colleagues, is that we teach such a broad curriculum that it is almost impossible to have expertise in all subjects, so we must ensure that all staff have access to what they need to know in order to deliver the best possible lessons for all areas they are required to teach.

Key questions to ask:

- How do we ensure that everyone has all the knowledge and tools they need?
- What does good subject knowledge look like in core and foundation subjects? Is it different?
- Do we have a culture that embraces the idea that we can all improve, not just some?
- How do we get better as a collective, rather than some individuals improving and leaving others behind?
- Are our expectations around CPD clear?
- Is our CPD available/accessible to all? If not, what issues do we need to try to mitigate?
- How do we know our CPD is having an impact? Are there things we need to less of in order to prioritise what we need to do more of?

7. Maximising pupil outcomes in all year groups is imperative - this is our most important measure in assuring that, academically, our children are ready to access the secondary curriculum.

We reject the pervasive notion that we either value the whole child or their academic achievement or that one is more important than the other. They are inextricably linked and, as schools, our mandate is to educate the children we serve. If our children are unable to access the curriculum at secondary school, they are set up for significant future struggle and it is imperative that we recognise our role here. It is not just Y6 where outcomes become important, if, as we say, we have a clear progression model for the curriculum, we need to ensure that each stage acts as preparation for the next. As well as staff understanding previous learning (as already discussed), we need to know what they will have to be able to know and do as they move forward; this includes the 'learning behaviours' they will need to access the rigorous academic curriculum they deserve.

Key questions to ask:

- Are we sure about what children need to be able to do for the next stages to ensure they are prepared? Do EYFS staff know what Y1 expectations look like (e.g. for sitting on carpet etc.)? Do KS1 staff know what KS2 expectations look like (e.g. can they get used to extended independent work by the end of Y2 etc.)? Have we specified the 'learning behaviours' we need children to be able to master/demonstrate for each stage?

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- Do all staff, in all year groups understand the role they play in achieving high academic outcomes for all pupils? How do we know?
- Is this message clear for all pupils? How do we know?
- How do we ensure that no child is 'left behind' at any stage of their education, regardless of external factors?

8. We set the highest expectations for all our pupils in their academic outcomes, their personal conduct, and their contribution as members of the communities to which they belong in order that they may flourish now and in the future.

We accept that everyone believes they have high expectations but that individuals describe these expectations differently. If 'high expectations' means different things to different people, then really it means nothing at all. Therefore, we need to codify and set out, in detail, what these are and what they look like in our schools. For example, if we say we want children to walk around the school in a sensible manner, what does 'sensible' look like? If it looks different for different members of staff, then neither staff nor children will be clear about what is expected – this leads to uncertainty and, often, upset (especially for our most vulnerable children who need clear boundaries most). It can be tempting to lower expectations to what might be easiest for children to meet but, by having the highest expectations (not just "good enough for them"), we demonstrate to children that we believe in them and what they can achieve. We believe that it is the combination of the elements described in this final principle that will allow our children to flourish as set out in "The DEMAT promise".

Key questions to ask:

- Do we ALL uphold the HIGHEST expectations?
- Do we all agree on what these look like in all areas of school life (academic outcomes, personal conduct etc?). Have we codified these (would a new staff member know where to find them?)?
- Do we model the highest expectations as staff – are there any areas where we lower these? Are they for ALL children (bearing in mind we sometimes need to make reasonable adjustments, but this should be exceptional)?
- Do we overcommunicate them, to all members of our community so there is no doubt as to what we are aiming for?
- Are there any standards/expectations we would like to raise?

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