

Curriculum Policy

Reviewed on: Summer 2020

Next Review due: Summer 2021

Signed by:



Chair of Governors

Signed by:



Headteacher



1. Introduction.

This policy shares with everyone, but especially parents:

The knowledge and skills we have designed for our children to learn; our curriculum **intent**.

How we teach the children our curriculum; our **implementation**.

How we review or assess how well the children are able to do and know more; our **impact**.

These three aspects of our work continue from one to another. They are not thought of separately. The quality of education offered is determined by these interrelated considerations.

Governors Vision and ethos for our school.

Our governors set the school's vision and ethos. These are reviewed regularly. Our vision and ethos can best be articulated as:

"We are happy, well-rounded people who achieve excellence by continually reflecting to make our best even better.

Our ethos is clear; we treat others how we would like to be treated.

These statements guide our everyday work and permeate all decisions we make.

How do we define learning?

Learning can be defined as an **alteration in long-term memory**. If nothing has altered in long-term memory, it can be said that nothing has been learned.

The school uses approaches that help pupils to integrate new knowledge into the long-term memory and make enduring connections that foster understanding.

The end result of our well-taught curriculum is that pupils **know more, remember more** and are able to **do more**.

Cognitive science tells us that working memory is limited and that cognitive load is too high if children are rushed through content.

This limits the acquisition of long-term memory. Cognitive science also tells us that in order for children to become creative thinkers, or have a greater depth of understanding they must first master the basics, which takes time.

2. What do we intend to teach?

Our curriculum is a bespoke, ambitious curriculum for all Gorseland pupils that exceeds the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Our children experience a wide breadth of study and have, by the end of each key stage, an ambitious body of procedural and semantic knowledge.

Curriculum drivers shape our curriculum breadth. They are derived from an exploration of the backgrounds of our children, our beliefs about high quality education and our values. They are used to ensure we give our children appropriate and ambitious curriculum opportunities.

We seek to find conscious connections and appropriate opportunities to enhance our children's understanding of **Diversity, the Arts and our Environment**.

Diversity - This means we educate children so that they have a better understanding that each individual is unique and also recognising our individual differences. The differences can be in health, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs or other ideologies.

This shapes our children's thinking as we prepare them to be interdependent citizens that contribute positively to British society.

The Arts - This means we provide our children with a variety of engaging and exciting opportunities that enable them to develop positively in their learning, both academically as well as socially, emotionally and culturally. Giving children quality experiences of the arts in and out of the classroom impacts greatly upon the standards of attainment achieved by the children. Our vision and ethos is reflected in our desire for our children to become interdependent, responsible learners capable of critical and creative thinking: we believe the arts are an essential ingredient in this process. We believe that this will enhance children's learning through making the curriculum more exciting and engaging.

Environment Education - Environmental education is a process that encourages children to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve their environment. As a result, children develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and develop the skills to make informed and responsible decisions.

Cultural Capital - gives our children the vital background knowledge required to be informed and thoughtful members of our community who understand and believe in British values. Cultural Capital is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.

We support this in so many ways such as; the high quality book reading spine for each year group, our democratic class meetings and our cultural curriculum offer.

3. Subject Content and Threshold Concepts

Our curriculum distinguishes between subject content and 'threshold concepts'.

Subject content is the specific aspects of subjects that are studied such as the Romans. Threshold concepts such as: using sources to investigate the past, tie together the subject topics into meaningful learning. This **connects** new learning to what children have already learnt.

The same concepts are explored in a wide breadth of subject topics. Through this 'forwards-and-backwards engineering' of the curriculum, children return to the same concepts over and over and gradually *building* their understanding of them.

The threshold concepts remain constant. However, the cognitive demand placed on maturing children develops. We separate the National Curriculum content and years into three sections are known as Milestones.

Each milestone includes the procedural and semantic knowledge children need to understand organised by the threshold concepts. This provides a progression model.

Procedural Knowledge involves skills for example: calculation strategies, walking, handwriting. Semantic Knowledge involves understanding the meaning of facts and their interrelationships.

These types of knowledge are interdependent in that as one becomes more proficient procedurally such as in calculation, then one becomes more semantically knowledgeable about the number system, the more one practises the procedure of calculating.

Within each Milestone, children gradually progress in their procedural fluency and semantic strength through three cognitive domains: basic, advancing and deep. The goal for children is to display sustained mastery at the 'advancing' stage of understanding by the end of each milestone and for the most able to have a greater depth of understanding at the 'deep' stage. The time-scale for sustained mastery or greater depth is therefore two years of study.

As part of our progression model we use a different way of teaching, or pedagogical style in each of the cognitive domains of basic, advancing and deep. This is based on the research of Sweller, Kirschner (1) and Rosenshine (2) .

An ambitious curriculum design.

All subject leaders have carefully constructed a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and children with SEND, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

Leaders have considered how children enter the subject in the early years, or other starting points. They have coherently planned and sequenced the curriculum towards having sufficient knowledge and skills which interweave and build as they travel through school.

The curriculum is designed to ensure that it is progressive through the school to year 6, in anticipation for whatever comes next.

The school has described the content of what children should be able to do and know, by the end of their journey. Our curriculum also defines what a child has achieved when they have mastered the subject. The endpoint for subject leaders is to encourage all children to progress to becoming masters in their subject.

Ambition for all children.

The curriculum is skilfully and carefully adapted, designed and developed to be ambitious to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, and those disadvantaged in any way.

The *Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators* and Subject leaders liaise to ensure that the curriculum develops all children's knowledge, skills and abilities to apply what they know and can do with increasing fluency and independence. This is done, for example, by tailoring planning and providing resources that are linked to children's specific needs *both in the mainstream school and the specialist support unit*.

- (1) P A Kirschner, J Sweller and RE Clarke, *Educational Psychologist*, 41(2), 2006, pp 76-86.
- (2) B Rosenhire, *The case for explicit, teacher led cognitive strategy instruction*, March 24-28, 1997.

Subject leaders and class teachers work together to challenge the more able children by displaying sustained mastery at a greater depth of understanding at the 'deep' stage of learning.

3. Implementation

Children start their learning journey at home with their friends and family. This develops over time and their formal schooling starts with nursery providers (here or elsewhere), and then in our reception year. Other children join our school very occasionally outside of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

All of our curriculum subjects start where the children start – in nursery or reception. The curriculum acknowledges the firm foundations that are built in the Early Years and builds on this as children move through the school.

Children come to school with different backgrounds, experiences and expectations. We use the Early Years Foundation Stage [profile](#) and the Statutory Framework for the early years foundation [stage](#), to construct our curriculum.

Having started with early years learning clearly in mind our subject leaders and expert teachers tailor the whole school curriculum in line with the national curriculum and our curriculum drivers. The staff sequence the knowledge, skills, concepts and understanding in every subject.

We also understand that learning is invisible in the short-term and that sustained mastery takes time.



Our content is subject specific. We make intra-curricular links to strengthen connections between learning.

Continuous provision, in the form of daily routines, provides retrieval practice for previously learned content.

Our curriculum design is based on evidence from cognitive science; three main principles underpin it: Learning is most effective with spaced repetition. Interleaving helps pupils to discriminate between topics and aids long-term retention. Retrieval of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which increases both storage and retrieval strength.

We build upon the learning and skill development of the previous years. As the children's knowledge and understanding increases, they become more proficient.

Within each Milestone, children gradually progress in their procedural fluency and semantic strength through three cognitive domains: basic, advancing and deep.

Knowledge organisers help children to relate each topic to previously studied topics and to form strong cognitive frameworks that help children organise and interpret information, in other words, develop meaningful schemas.

We also *explicitly teach* pupils to use specific topic related vocabulary.

The effectiveness of our implementation is analysed by staff at all levels performing activities such as staff and pupil perception conversations. We work with teachers to make sure that lesson visits and planning of what and how we teach matches our curriculum design. This is supported by conversations with staff and subject leaders with the planning and the work children have been doing. These evaluations serve to help us tweak our design, so it evolves to meet the needs of the children. We assess children's progress continually in a formative way. We then crystallise these informal assessments three times a year against the three cognitive domains for each subject.

We use the threshold concepts to link new learning to previous learning. This helps develop rich schemas of learning which transfers more easily into the children's long term memory. They explore these concepts to connect new knowledge with existing knowledge.

Learning is continuous, it never ends. However, we do have clearly defined essential characteristics learners in each subject and a body of skills and knowledge we teach towards.

We call this our 'end point'. If children reach these endpoints at any time we further deepen their understanding and abilities.

4. Impact

School leaders and subject leaders work in partnership using a range of evaluative techniques to focus on the quality of what children can do and what they know at each stage of their journey.



We believe that our successful approach at Gorseland results in an engaging, high-quality education that provides children with the foundations and knowledge for understanding the world. We evaluate our progress and attainment to ensure that the journey leads children towards our clearly defined endpoints.

We evaluate the extent to which our curriculum meets the changing needs of all our children, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, so that they all leave our school with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to live happy and successful lives – whatever that may be.

We use the national outcomes to help evaluate our practice. We compare our mainstream children to these figures.

5. Investing in staff development and training opportunities

Gorseland blends individual weekly coaching of teachers with whole school training in the curriculum. This is to develop how to teach knowledge with what knowledge to teach. This blends the core messages for all, with the tailored training for individuals. The impact is shown in low turnover of staff and high subject and pedagogic knowledge.

Our staff share their subject expertise with others. We involve all staff in regular training.

We analyse the needs of the school as a whole, through lesson visits, talking to children, looking at the children's books with children and analysing summative results. We also analyse the needs of individual staff members and governors so we can tailor our training to match. In this way the areas we need to develop are swiftly improved and we consolidate the many strengths the school has.

6. The Role of Governors

Our Governors determine, support, monitor and review the school policies on

teaching and learning. The Headteacher will update the Governors on the Quality of Education within the school. However, we actively encourage our Governors to be visible in school whenever possible. In particular

they:

- Support the use of teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively
- Ensure that the school buildings and premises are best used to support high quality curriculum delivery
- Monitor curriculum approaches with due regard to health and safety regulations
- Monitor how effective curriculum design is in terms of not just raising pupil attainment and pupil progress, but how careful selection of curricular goals prepares pupils for the future
- Ensure that staff development, teacher's pay and appraisal promote high Quality of Education
- Monitor the effectiveness of the school's teaching and learning policies through the school self-evaluation processes. These would include systems such as Subject Leaders termly meeting

with subject Governors, termly Governor curriculum reviews, termly headteacher's report to governors.

7. The Role of Parents

The engagement of parents in the education of their children is fundamental to our school. Parents are provided with clear and timely information on how their child is progressing and their child's attainment relating to the national picture.

Parents are given a wealth of guidance about how to support their child such as newsletters and class briefings. We believe that parents have a responsibility to support their children and the school in implementing school policies.

We want parents to:

- Be fully informed and therefore involved in their child's learning journey and engaged with the various parent engagement activities offered
- We want parents to feel fully welcomed to offer their skill sets to contribute to the school's curriculum
- Ensure that their child has the best attendance record possible
- Support us in helping to encourage their child to be fit and healthy
- Inform the school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect a child's performance or behaviour in school
- Promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general
- Fulfil the requirements set out in the home/ school agreement

8. Monitoring and Review

The monitoring of the Quality of Education is led by the Headteacher *and School Governors*, and happens continually. This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure that we are able to take account of new initiatives, changes to the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school.