LEKHA SHARMA

CURRICULUM TO CLASSROOM

A HANDBOOK TO PROMPT THINKING AROUND PRIMARY CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DELIVERY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lekha Sharma is the Vice Principal - Quality of Education at a Primary School in South London. She is a blogger, TES columnist and a Postgraduate student at Oxford University, studying Learning and Teaching.

Lekha has worked in challenging schools across both London and the Midlands since completing her PGCE in Primary Education from The University of Warwick, Institute of Education.

In her current role she leads on Curriculum Design and Delivery and is a passionate consumer of Educational Research and how best it can be applied in schools to improve outcomes for all pupils.

Endorsements

'*Curriculum to Classroom* will be an absolute boon to colleagues developing their curriculum in primary schools. It is full of really helpful suggestions for embedding this work; it makes the case, correctly, that curriculum development is an ongoing process, not a quick fix. Lekha has an engaging style, and she speaks from the experience of implementing and refining this work in her own school. As a result, it is packed with practical suggestions for making this work manageable in every primary school.'

Mary Myatt
Education adviser and author

———◇———

'This is not a blueprint; it's much more useful than that. Diverse, practical, philosophical and thought-provoking stimulation for primary school leaders and curriculum designers everywhere.'

Joe Hallgarten
Curriculum Development Lead, LETTA Trust, Tower Hamlets

———◇———

---◇---

For my husband Ash and my darling daughter Ava – you both encourage, inspire and enthuse me every day and for that I'm forever grateful. And for my father, who quite correctly predicted that 'one day you'll write a book!' – thank you for your belief in me.

---◇---

Contents

Acknowledgements

It is an absolute privilege to be a part of the teaching profession and one of the truly unique and wonderful benefits of this is the sheer generosity and drive from educators far and wide to be continually learning and improving our practice. It is all of these educators that have inspired me to capture my curriculum thinking thus far within this book and whose thinking I've absorbed, amalgamated and reflected upon to draw this book together.

A heartfelt thank you to the entire team at Ark Oval Primary Academy, who I've worked alongside for the past few years and who have wholeheartedly embarked on our curriculum journey which is in part captured within the book, always in the name of providing our pupils with the best possible education. It hasn't been an easy journey, but the resilience and dedication of this team have always impressed me. A particular thank you to my mentors, past and present who have nurtured my passion for education, supported me and have shaped my understanding of curriculum design and delivery.

A huge shout-out to the wonderful colleagues who have contributed expert insights for the book – I have been truly touched by their support and guidance throughout the writing process.

Thank you to everyone at John Catt who made this book possible, particularly my editor Jonathan Barnes – the journey of creating this book has been something I've hugely relished.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my warmest gratitude and appreciation of the friends and family who have supported me at every turn of my journey so far. I couldn't have done this without each and every one of you.

Foreword

In 2014, primary schools in England adopted a renewed national curriculum. The rationale underpinning this was a widely applauded evolution of the national curriculum that preceded this. Educationalists across the country rejoiced at the prospect of embracing what was both aspirational by nature but stood for so much more than academic attainment alone. Although this meant schools had to do things differently, quite drastically in lots of cases, it also meant they had an opportunity to renew, reinvigorate and redefine in rather an exciting way. As exciting as this prospect was, the road to a curriculum that did everything that the National Curriculum said 'on the tin', whilst maintaining what made schools unique, was one schools anticipated to be paved with challenges. An intent needed to be carefully considered and an implementation needed to be judiciously executed to have the maximum positive impact on pupils in the classroom. It is on this very road that my colleagues and I have been travelling, across different schools, operating in different and challenging contexts, since 2014. This book captures that journey so far and offers an overview of the multiple facets of this: the research base, how it looks in schools on the ground, the pitfalls, the most successful areas of practice and, most importantly, how these all mesh together to create something truly unique and inspiring for pupils. The journey is ongoing but I hope this book grapples with some of the very challenges you may be facing in your school at this time, so that you a) know that you are NOT alone; and b) can draw on what works for you as a school to enhance your curriculum. I by no means claim to have all the answers. Not every idea will be applicable, not every stance will resonate with yours, but if you can take some thinking from this that stimulates an idea or augments your

practice, I would very much consider the job done. So, if you're in the process of developing your curriculum and need a practical guide on how to apply educational research in a working, breathing school, *Curriculum to Classroom* is the book for you.

This book will give you an insight to the entire process of primary curriculum design and delivery, with potential short-, medium- and long-term solutions to the challenges that your school may face in ensuring your curriculum meets and, indeed, exceeds the requirements of the 2014 National Curriculum, whilst maintaining a unique approach that is bespoke to your pupils. Although this book isn't intended to be a fast-track to acing Ofsted, it will on occasion reference the new framework to take into consideration the key concepts that underly the Ofsted judgement of a school's 'Quality of Education', which very much concerns the curriculum a school has on offer.

Woven into the book are the following elements:

- What does the research say?
- Practical considerations
- Personal experiences of navigating different parts of the process
- Expert opinions

The book has a heavy focus on how curriculum translates into the classroom and for pupils specifically because as research in education accelerates at an exciting pace and we delve fervidly into the application of this research in our classrooms, so too must we ensure our core purpose remains unscathed and untouched. And that purpose is forever to impart knowledge, to ensure our pupils have a life-long love for learning and enable them to forge a strong sense of self so that they may confidently take their place in the world and make it a better place to be.

Introduction

What a curriculum is and why it's important we get it right

'To inspire starts with the clarity of why' – Simon Sinek

Let's start at the 'end' … It was only after moving through the process of curriculum design and delivery that I really had a secure understanding of what a 'curriculum' actually is and the best way I can summarise it is this: a curriculum is what your school stands for; the foundations on which a school is built upon and the learning journey a pupil embarks on from the minute they join your institution, encompassing all opportunities a pupil is provided with. I use the word 'institution' because it connotes an established way of doing things. Of course, curriculums are refined over time (as we will discuss later in the book) but, fundamentally, that defined knowledge and learning that you commit to teaching makes up your school's curriculum.

What a curriculum *isn't*:

- ➜ A piece of paper
- ➜ A one-size-fits-all approach
- ➜ Confined to senior leaders
- ➜ Surface level. Rather it runs deep and things like long- and

medium-term plans sit atop it, strengthening and building up from its grassroots foundations.

I like to think of a school's curriculum as a living, breathing organism and, just like all organisms, it thrives when it is best suited to its environment. Let's delve into this idea further…

The National Curriculum 2014 sets out statutory programmes of studies for all subjects at a national level:

'Teachers should set high expectations for every pupil. They should plan stretching work for pupils whose attainment is significantly above the expected standard. They have an even greater obligation to plan lessons for pupils who have low levels of prior attainment or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teachers should use appropriate assessment to set targets which are deliberately ambitious' (Department for Education, 2013 pg. 8)

Schools need to demonstrate that they are meeting, if not exceeding, the requirements of the National Curriculum, but this absolutely does not limit schools in making the curriculum their own:

'Inspectors will make a judgement on the quality of education by evaluating the extent to which: leaders take on or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.' (Education Inspection Framework – Ofsted 2019)

Note the last bit: 'knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life' – not just education. If anything, we have a moral obligation as educators to ensure the curriculum we provide for our pupils gives them more than just academic knowledge. It needs to meet their needs as

individuals, address both the challenges and opportunities their context presents and provide them with the necessary cultural capital to ensure they can engage with their learning and the world, whatever their starting points. This reinforces the need for schools to design **aspirational, broad curriculums which are both knowledge and experience rich**. This will act as a driver for closing the disadvantaged gap and ensure that, regardless of what context a school is operating in, their pupils can be given all the tools to achieve and succeed. What does 'aspirational' actually mean in the context of curriculum? That we don't make assumptions about what our pupils can do, instead we logically and coherently sequence the learning in a way that gives them the highest possible chance of securing that learning and being able to use it meaningfully as a springboard to becoming confident, knowledgeable 'thinkers'.

References

Department for Education (2013) 'The National Curriculum in England'. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425601/PRIMARY_national_curriculum.pdf [Accessed May 2020]

Ofsted (2019) 'The education inspection framework'.Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework [Accessed May 2020]

Chapter one

Curriculum principles: deciding what your curriculum stands for and giving it legs

If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything' – Malcolm X

In the introduction, I summarised the curriculum as 'what a school stands for and the foundation upon which schools are built upon'. But how do you go about establishing and, more importantly, articulating this?

This chapter draws upon many of the ideas touched upon in the Introduction centred on establishing a real meaning and purpose for your curriculum that sets the tone for the quality of education in your school. One of the most fascinating parts of the curriculum design process for me as a leader was coming together with colleagues and staff, talking to children and parents and finding out what meant the most to them when it came to the education the school was providing. This turned out to be an immensely crucial part of the whole process because it enabled us to really distil the key elements that formed the principles that underpinned our renewed curriculum. Note that this fed into the principles of the curriculum and that this was distinct from the process of mapping out the 'knowledge journey' pupils would be embarking upon.

This process started with carrying out qualitative research involving focus groups, surveys and face-to-face chats to establish what the people who would be engaging with the curriculum actually wanted out of it. Although the learning journey that pupils will travel needs to be clearly defined by a school, I strongly believe that the community a school is serving needs to engage with this process to some extent. The beauty of this process was seeing the common trends emerge between the different stakeholders – we then were able to articulate the purpose of our curriculum more clearly to our school community and were confident that we could collectively work towards this common purpose.

The graphic below shows the key themes that surfaced from the qualitative research we carried out.

What the PUPILS said...

◆ Fun ◆ Interesting ◆ Relevant to our lives ◆ Exciting ◆ Pupils wanted to know what they were learning and why it mattered

Q: What's important to you when it comes to the education the school provides?

What the STAFF said...

◆ Fun to teach ◆ Avoidance of 'dry' topics ◆ Building on learning that went before ◆ Wanted to have agency and involvement in what they taught

What the PARENTS said...

◆ Challenging ◆ Allowed their pupils to be successful in their learning ◆ They wanted to be in the 'loop' and know about what was being taught/learnt

What the RESEARCH said...

◆ Cultural capital is key ◆ Learning breeds learning ◆ Repetition helps memory ◆ People like challenges ◆ Motivation is important when it comes to learning

From this, our research base and our vision of the kind of pupils we wanted to 'produce', we were able to pull together the four key principles of our overarching curriculum:

1. Knowledge
2. Skills
3. Experiences
4. Holistic approach

Knowledge

Think of an apple. As a child, when you first encountered an apple, you had quite limited knowledge about it. You were probably unsure as an infant what an apple actually was until you engaged with this unknown object, to discover it was a food item. Slowly, over time, your understanding of an apple grew. You came to realise that you the apple could be whole, or it could be sliced. You came to learn that you could get green apples or red apples and even pink apples! As your knowledge of this fruit developed over time, you began to learn where apples grew – in an orchard. And if you're a particular apple enthusiast, much like Ned Flanders in *The Simpsons,* you'd even know the distinction between apple juice and apple cider ('If it's tangy and brown, you're in cider town. If it's clear and yella, you've got juice there, fella.')

If your initial understanding of the apple had been missing from this series of elaborations, would you understand how to respond in a situation where you were presented with apple juice (the answer is to drink it!) or even be able to subsequently go on to become an apple enthusiast like our friend Ned? No. Because, knowledge breeds knowledge. Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist who studied cognitive development. One of the key components to his cognitive theory was the idea of 'schemas' – the basic building blocks of learning. He explained that schemas are 'a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning'. Essentially, schemas

are ways of organising knowledge that links existing knowledge to new knowledge about something until it is embedded in memory and can be retrieved readily when required. It helps human beings respond and react appropriately in novel situations based on their understanding of a central concept. So, knowledge and its importance in the curriculum is clearly undeniable. It seems fairly obvious but the more knowledge rich the curriculum, the more our pupils will know and, subsequently, the more they will be able to do!

Sequencing this knowledge is of utmost importance. Mapping out knowledge so that it is coherently sequenced, builds on prior knowledge and connects across years means that pupils won't have disjointed, partial understanding. Rather, their knowledge will have secure foundations and both teachers and pupils will be clear on where the knowledge has come from and where it's going next.

Skills

You could give me all the books ever written about football and I could sit through 1,000 lectures from world-class footballers on the subtle nuances of the game and I still wouldn't be able to *successfully* participate in a physical game of football. Skill is all about the application of knowledge and without intentional skill-building and the practice of skill, it simply does not develop. Why is important that we embed this into our curriculum? Because without it, pupils won't be able to take that knowledge and apply it to different contexts to maximise its true potential. Just like every skill, 'practice makes perfect' so it's not just a case of 'one and done' – skills have to repeatedly practised to hone and perfect them. A particularly important skill? Thinking skills. The art of thinking. Critical thinking, problem solving and thinking about things from different perspectives are just some of the skills that open the gates to yet more … thinking and learning. To summarise … pupils need to be taught how to think, to learn so that they can think, and learn some more.

Experiences

John Dewey, an American psychologist, was a huge advocate of learning through experience and his research emphasised the need to 'learn by doing' – he asserted that children needed to be exposed to learning experiences and opportunities that strengthened their learning. Experiences allow knowledge and learning to come to life and have real meaning. Here comes another popular culture reference to illustrate the importance of experiences – this time from the ever-talented Robin Williams who plays a well-meaning psychiatrist in the classic movie *Good Will Hunting*:

> 'So, if I asked you about art, you'd probably give me the skinny on every art book ever written. Michelangelo, you know a lot about him. Life's work, political aspirations…the whole works, right? But I'll bet you can't tell me what it smells like in the Sistine Chapel. You've never actually stood there and looked up at that beautiful ceiling; seen that.'

The point of this quote isn't to urge you to immediately hold a governors' meeting to justify the funds for a school trip to the Sistine chapel – it's more about the underlying ideology; that, of course, knowledge is fundamental but the beauty and magic that comes about when it's paired with experience is unmatched and will strengthen learning and understanding. As a school you may want to map out your 'experiences offer': a comprehensive list of experiences you want to provide pupils with.

Holistic approach

The holistic approach refers to the idea that the curriculum should stand for far more than just 'the scores on the doors' – something very much reflected in the 2014 National Curriculum and subsequently the Ofsted Inspection Framework 2019. It's an approach that considers the importance of developing the 'whole child' beyond what they are learning in an academic capacity. Critics of traditional schooling claim that school doesn't prepare pupils for the realities of the real world – this tackles that

criticism head on. For pupils to successfully take their place in the world, the non-academic skills and knowledge they require will very much need to feature in their primary school curriculum. It's things like how to handle their finances, how to resolve conflict, how to improve their self-esteem, how to regulate their own emotions and how to campaign for something they feel passionately about. These 'life skills' paired with the right knowledge, the practised skills to apply that knowledge and the experiences to make that knowledge meaningful, felt like the right mix to give our pupils the tools they need to succeed. Below are just some of the fantastic organisations that provide excellent opportunities to engage in these life skills:

- My Bnk: https://www.mybnk.org. An organisation that provides pupils with a financial education: everything from opening your first bank account to how to manage your savings.
- Outward Bound: https://www.outwardbound.org.uk. An educational charity that helps pupils develop positive attitudes and skills through learning and adventures in the wild.
- Primary Sports UK: https://primarysportsuk.com/healthy-workshops. An organisation that supports schools with PE provision in schools but also provides 'Healthy Workshops' on mental mealth, mealthy eating and the importance of physical activity.

The principles we crafted won't necessarily be the ones you identify for your school's curriculum – they may be referred to as something else, deviate from ours somewhat or even combine these ideas together. But having key principles underpinning your curriculum work will act as a solid scaffold for your structure and enable you to have a common language when thinking about how all the pieces of the puzzle slot together seamlessly. It's what I like to think of as 'giving your curriculum legs'.

Below are some short-, medium- and long-term solutions for establishing the core principles of your curriculum – a list of suggestions if time isn't on your side and some more meaty ideas for long-game curriculum projects.

Short-term
- Complete a quick pro/cons list about the current curriculum. Keep what works and identify what needs to change, what the challenges of this will be and potential solutions.
- Quick Search: what opportunities are there in your local area to supplement and enrich your curriculum? What makes your local area special/unique? How can this deepen the contextual significance of the curriculum? Do a quick mind map.

Solutions for establishing the core principles of your curriculum
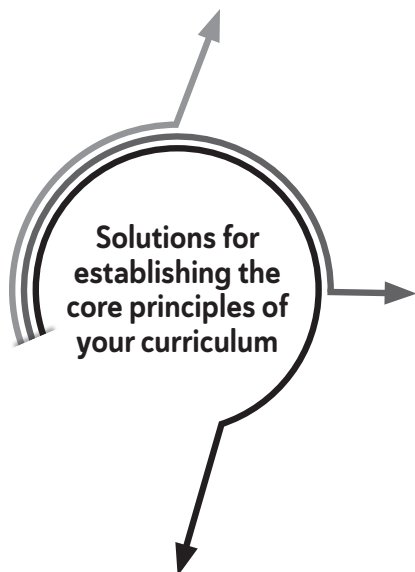
Medium-term
- Complete some qualitative research in-house with a panel of pupils, teachers, support staff, parents and governors. What do they like about the current curriculum and what improvements do they envisage? (Don't underestimate the value of directly asking primary-aged pupils this question - the answers will fascinate you!)
- Map out your sequence of learning and ensure knowledge is coherently sequenced so that it builds on prior learning and is revisited over time.
- Create a 'learning journey' overview so this sequence of learning is clear to see for all.

Long-term
- Enlist the help of a curriculum team to pull thinking around curriculum intention together and to work closely and regularly with teachers developing their understanding of how knowledge has been mapped out.
- Design a CPD approach that ensures teachers are trained in what learning looks like, not only in the year group they teach but across the school so that they are able to track backward and forward when delivering the curriculum.

What does this mean for my pupils?

It may not be steeped in research and be highly anecdotal but there is something powerful about being able to articulate to your pupils the

thinking and belief that has formed the foundation of your curriculum offer. They say it takes a village to raise a child but I argue that it takes a village to educate a child too. More than a village – every parent, every member of the community, every teacher has a stake in a child's learning. Having defined curriculum principles is a great way to have a clear 'shout it from the rooftops' ideology about what you're committing to provide for your pupils and what your school's curriculum really stands for.

Expert Insight from Damian McBeath
Principal, The John Wallis Church of England Academy

At the heart of all great schools sits an inspirational, rigorous well-thought-out curriculum.

One of the most important decision schools will make is 'what to teach?' Schools need to make some rather large decisions and justify their rationale for doing so:

- Within the history curriculum, who are the significant people and places that pupils will study? Why?

- Within geography, which regions will be explored as contrasting locations? Why? Which artists or movements of art will pupils' study? Why?

- How will the school teach pupils kindness? Or courage?

- How does the curriculum reflect young people's lived experiences? Does it reflect their current reality or force them to confront different ways of thinking?

There are endless questions, the answers to which shine a sharp focus on a school's values and their shared beliefs. In deciding what to teach, schools

must first ask deep philosophical questions about the purpose of education. The curriculum is much more than a series of schemes of work or a map for progression through subjects, it is the embodiment of the vision and aims of any educational establishment. It helps to articulate expected and intended outcomes and provides clarity around how the school will support its students in achieving these. The purpose should shape the curriculum. For example, if a school's overriding vision is to prepare pupils for the world of work or 'life beyond school', then a much greater emphasis will be placed on subject options linked to career aspirations, partnerships with business, guest speakers from industry etc; however if the vision is about personal growth and expanding minds then you would expect a very different offer in terms subject choice, guest speakers, visits and experiences.

From a personal perspective, a great curriculum intention should reflect the fact that children arrive at primary school with a real curiosity and zest for learning. They bounce through the doors of nursery or reception to a world of opportunity before them.

The curriculum should aim to inspire those young minds to keep learning. It should share with them a deep and meaningful content of knowledge; give them the courage and confidence to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively. And above all, it must maintain their natural curiosity and inquisitiveness.

The curriculum intention is driven by the school's intention. At its very core, what does it stand for?

References

Ansbacher T. (1998) 'John Dewey's Experience and Education: Lesson for Museums', *Curator the Museum Journal,* Vol. 41 (no.1), pp. 36-39

Pankin, J. (2013) 'Schema Theory and Concept Formation' [website]. Retrieved from: http://web.mit.edu/pankin/www/Schema_Theory_and_Concept_Formation.pdf [Accessed April 2020]

Chapter two

Curriculum infrastructure

'The key leadership skill in curriculum innovation is the judicious and strategic use of all staff in a joint endeavour directed towards the implementation of a revised curriculum. Good leaders recognise the necessity of allowing time and space for reflection, evaluation and a carefully staged process of change with the whole school working in a unified direction. Successful leaders are also prepared to seek advice and to research new approaches to the curriculum, since teachers value explicit guidance in constructing new formats which capture cross-curricular approaches to learning, as well as the skills and knowledge to be covered in specific subject areas. Thus, the process of implementation must be managed, since opportunity to trial and review planning and recording formats is seen as central to the process of change.'

'Leading curriculum innovation in primary schools'
by Professor Mark Brundrett and Dr Diane Duncan,
Liverpool John Moores University, September 2010.

In this chapter we'll be unpicking the idea set out above by Professor Mark Brundrett and Dr Diane Duncan about the importance of the curriculum being a 'joint endeavour'. I think of all the lessons I've learnt about curriculum, this is probably the most crucial. An effective curriculum simply cannot lie in the hands of the few. Of course, there are caveats to this, and this cannot come at the cost of clarity, but it stands to reason that the success of your intended curriculum comes down to the teaching and delivery of it. There's a very important step in between, however – that of the role of the subject leaders who, in the primary phase, are even more pivotal in ensuring that the gap between what's mapped out on paper as your intended curriculum is executed with finesse and rigour in the classroom and that the pupils reap the full benefits of the thinking behind it.

Having a subject lead allocated for each subject is fairly common practice across most primary schools in response to the 2014 National Curriculum but what comes next? Below are some of the key challenges that schools face around subject development in the primary phase, given the range of subjects that need to be taught.
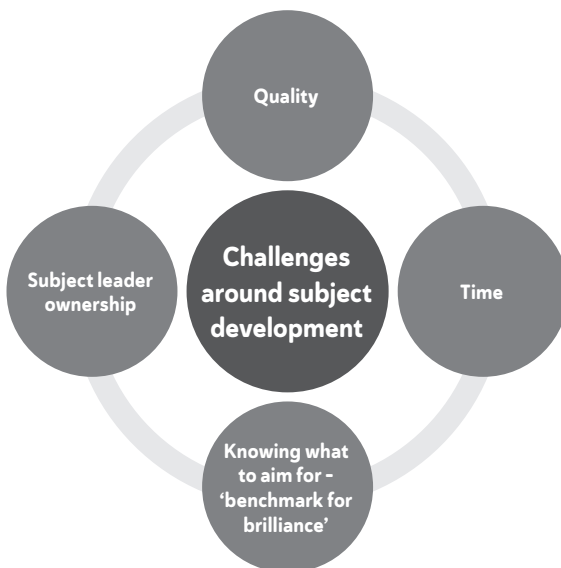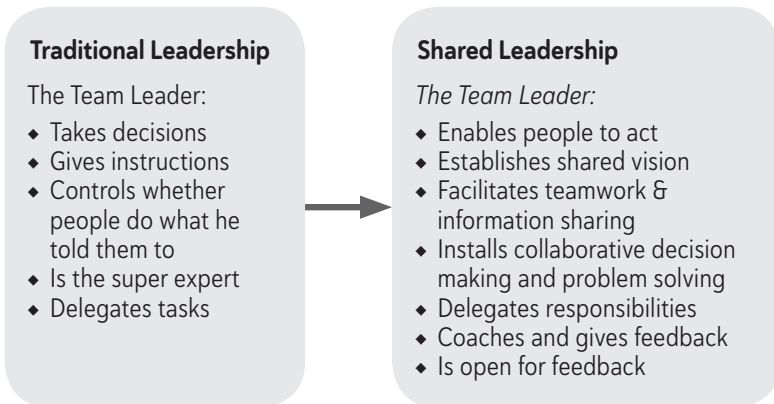
Let's look at these in turn and consider some of the potential solutions to facing these challenges so that there is a strong model of distributed leadership in the development of your curriculum.

Subject leader ownership

In chapter 1, we looked at creating curriculum principles and a vision for the curriculum. But subjects across the primary phase are so incredibly varied and have distinct disciplinary competencies that they have different principles of their own. How can we reconcile ensuring a shared vision is maintained whilst individual subject development thrives?

In an article by Alma Harris, she explores how distributing leadership in schools may contribute to 'building professional learning communities both within and between schools'. This idea forms the foundation of why distributed leadership can be incredibly effective in developing curriculum in schools.

The concept of 'distributed leadership' is an important one here and works by bridging that gap between curriculum intention and implementation. Below is a diagram that shows the difference between the role of the team or curriculum lead in a traditional leadership model and in a shared leadership model.

Traditional Leadership

The Team Leader:
- Takes decisions
- Gives instructions
- Controls whether people do what he told them to
- Is the super expert
- Delegates tasks

Shared Leadership

The Team Leader:
- Enables people to act
- Establishes shared vision
- Facilitates teamwork & information sharing
- Installs collaborative decision making and problem solving
- Delegates responsibilities
- Coaches and gives feedback
- Is open for feedback

From: https://www.movelearning.com/en/19-englisch/resources/food-for-thought-shaping-organization/48-distributed-leadership-autonomous-motivation

By moving our curriculum leadership towards a shared leadership approach, we begin to facilitate and enable subject leads to own and champion their individual subjects, whilst still maintaining a common purpose and vision (in the form of the curriculum principles).

Below is a diagram of a suggested overarching timeline of subject leadership development from day dot, as facilitated by a curriculum lead or senior leader. The activities in this diagram all promote subject leads owning their subject area and having a deep and informed understanding of their subject area so all the 'cogs of the curriculum' can work in conjunction, as it were.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Subject intention aligned to National Curriculum	Subject audit to see what works and to shape priorities	Action planning to align priorities with wider school priorities and make it manageable	Subject specific CPD programme to support staff	Reviewing impact and reshaping priorities	Adjusting CPD offer accordingly

Quality

Ensuring high-quality subject-specific CPD can be a challenge in the primary phase. After all, subject leads themselves may not always be experts in that subject and may have only studied it briefly themselves during their own education. So how can we ensure subjects are being appropriately led and developed if this is the case? Firstly, I think we need to reassure subject leads that their job isn't to know absolutely everything about their subject. Their job is to contribute to a culture of continuous learning by all and what better way to do this than model it themselves? There are a number of wonderful organisations that provide subject-specific CPD for subject leads in the primary phase both focused

around the disciplines themselves and also around how to lead a subject effectively. Remember that subject leads may be very new to leadership and this needs to be recognised and supported by the curriculum or senior leadership team appropriately.

Time

This is a very real challenge faced by all schools. Time to train teachers, time to share and review ideas and time to implement change in a manageable and sustainable way. In the primary phase, with 13 subjects or more, this can be a tall order. How do you ensure each subject gets the CPD time it needs to develop teachers' subject knowledge, support them with pedagogy and to go back round to review and reinforce the changes made in the delivery of subjects?

The answer to this lies in taking a strategic approach to subject development. A useful activity to tackle this is coming together as a staff group and evaluating which subjects you collectively feel are a strength and which subjects are one's teachers feel less confident delivering.

Once you've identified the subjects that require more development, mapping out a CPD 'path' that has a clear focus and expands upon and revisits these clear foci over a period of time (say a half-term) can be incredibly effective.

Another challenge is balancing subject specific CPD with more responsive CPD, for example around pedagogy, that you feel teachers require. For example, if you notice that lots of teachers are struggling with Assessment for Learning techniques across lessons. Responsive CPD for me seems akin to 'in the moment' live feedback for our pupils. It's impactful because it addresses misconceptions there and then. It may be necessary to go off plan and address teaching and learning as a whole but having a strategic plan for curriculum development will allow you to stay on track in terms of developing subjects within their own right.

Knowing what to aim for

When it comes to knowing what the 'gold standard' is for individual subject development, we can very much draw from the expertise of our secondary colleagues. When we teach history in the primary phase, we very much want to inspire and instil a love of the subject in the pupils. Therefore, drawing on the subject-specific pedagogy and key competencies that are developed beyond primary is crucial. Similar to how as teachers we would want a solid understanding of where the pupils have come from in terms of their learning, we also need to consider where their learning is going next.

I particularly love the idea of referring to the pupils as subject specialists in lessons. 'In today's history lessons, we're going to be exploring primary sources *as historians* and seeing what we can learn about the past from these.' A really subtle but powerful tweak to approaching these individual subjects that a) the children love b) promotes a real love for the unique nature of individual subjects and reiterates the individual importance of each subject c) makes things far more exciting for pupils.

Equally, our secondary colleagues may benefit if we can try to emulate some of the subject-specific pedagogical approaches e.g. in a history lesson, we may employ more discussion-based exploration of content, encouraging pupils to explore multiple viewpoints and test the strength of these assertions given the evidence we've gathered, whereas in Mathematics, which by nature is more concrete, we may be more focused around unpicking processes to reach a indisputable answer. This will allow pupils to develop and practice strong 'habits of a historian' or 'habits of a mathematician'.

A worthwhile endeavour is to actually explore the role of a historian and their journey to becoming one. By doing this, we construct a very clear vision of the learning habits we need to employ in the history classroom in order to help our pupils follow that path, should they choose to pursue that subject further. This can also help subject leads shape strong and clear intent statements by considering the end goal.

Historians typically do the following:

- Gather historical data from various sources, including archives, books, and artifacts
- Analyze and interpret historical information to determine its authenticity and significance
- Trace historical developments in a particular field
- Engage with the public through educational programs and presentations
- Archive or preserve materials and artifacts in museums, visitor centers, and historic sites
- Provide advice or guidance on historical topics and preservation issues
- Write reports, articles, and books on findings and theories

Practical strategies and top tips

Short-term

- Assign a teacher to each subject across the curriculum.
- Draw on teachers' interests and areas of specialty.
- Discuss as a leadership team and staff what the strengths and areas for development are for individual subjects across the curriculum.
- Explore the language teachers are using in individual subjects. Referring to the children as 'scientists', 'historians' and 'musicians' can be so incredibly empowering for them as learners.

Practical strategies and top tips
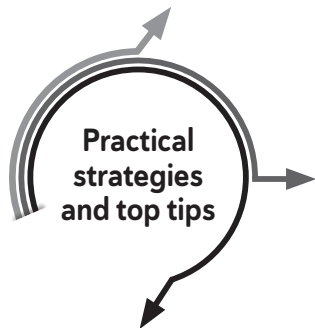
Medium-term

- Map out a 'CPD path' for individual subjects based on the subjects which need most development of in terms of planning, delivery and subject knowledge. Stray from this if you need to but commit to really developing an individual subject with help from subject specialists and our knowledgeable secondary colleagues.

Long-term

- Consider subject-specific pedagogy and how we can embed this into the implementation of wider curriculum. Drawing on the expertise of our secondary colleagues can be a great source of information on this and can also hugely aid primary-secondary transition.

Expert Insight from Jennifer Webb
Author and Assistant Principal @funkypedagogy

The Finnish word 'sivistys' describes the knowledge, moral development and breadth of vision gained through education. This 'vision' and life-long development is why subject expertise is so powerful; primary education is the beginning of a path which can lead to anywhere. We give students a platform from which to build interest, leading over the years to skill, expertise, specialism, creation, virtuosity...

Every curricular subject is a potential life-long journey with its own unique challenges. Do we take students on a well-planned expedition with a knowledgeable guide, or do we head off into the fog and flounder in confusion? A subject specialist needn't know everything – but they *do* need to create a culture of enquiry and ambition, having their sights set on the research scientists, artisan bakers, life-long readers or orchestral musicians who might be sitting in front of them. They must, therefore, see the path clearly. A teacher cannot support and challenge their students if they don't know what comes next. They can't effectively question and adapt lesson planning if their sight is limited. Leaders must give time and space for subject leads to explore their subjects and allow key skills, knowledge and principles to percolate. Schools which champion excellent knowledge and passion in curricular subjects will set students on their own paths of learning which will last a lifetime.

References

Brundrett, M. and Duncan, D. (2010) 'Leading Curriculum Innovation in Primary Schools'. National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. Retrieved from: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2095/1/download%3fid=139315&filename=leading-curriculum-innovation-in-primary-schools.pdf [Accessed April 2020]

Harris, A. and Jones, D. (2017) 'Professional Learning Communities: A Strategy for School and System Improvement?' [website], 16/2/2017. Retrieved from:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alma_Harris/publication/315828133_
Professional_Learning_Communities_A_Strategy_for_School_and_
System_Improvement/links/58ebd49ea6fdccb746ab9580/Professional-
Learning-Communities-A-Strategy-for-School-and-System-Improvement.
pdf [Accessed February 2020]

McLeod, S (2018) 'Jean Piaget's Theory and Stages of Cognitive Development'
[website] Retrieved from: https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html
[Accessed February 2020]

Chapter three

Reading and its role
in the curriculum

*'All knowledge is connected to other knowledge.
The fun is in making the connections'* – Arthur Aufderheide

The importance of reading and the role it plays across the entire curriculum has never been more established. Reading is, without a doubt, a powerful driving force for learning as a whole.

How can we establish and embed reading across subjects so that it enhances and reinforces the entirety of the curriculum? In this chapter we will be exploring exactly this. The areas we will focus on are:

- ➜ Reading as a disciplinary tool
- ➜ Reading to develop cultural literacy – E. D. Hirsch
- ➜ Reading to develop emotional literacy
- ➜ Reading for pleasure

We will look at these through the lens of one piece of key research and then explore the practical implications of this around curriculum design.

Reading as a disciplinary tool – key research

Reading is a stand-alone subject in the primary phase and justifiably so. Literacy skills are of course are essential. However, reading serves an even greater purpose that needs to be considered carefully when it comes to curriculum design. It acts as a key to unlocking learning across the wider curriculum and is a disciplinary tool.

Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) explored a model of literacy that was progressive and looked at how reading skills developed over time. They proposed that there were three 'stages': 1) basic literacy skills (decoding and high frequency words); 2) intermediate literacy skills (comprehension and vocabulary knowledge); and 3) disciplinary literacy skills (literacy skills that vary between disciplines). This idea can be illustrated quite clearly in the primary phrase. In the early years, the focus of reading is the teaching of phonics. Once children have secured these foundational reading skills, they move on the 'reading to understand' phase, where they learn how to comprehend texts, and then progress to having to integrate reading skills within disciplines. Let's take, for example, history. History presents a unique opportunity for pupils to not only read historical texts with a view to understanding what has happened in the past, but also allows them to gradually develop the skills to explore, interrogate and question a text. These skills are of course reading skills that we may see in a reading lesson, but within the context of history we find a unique opportunity to develop this unique sub-strand of reading – a strand critical to that of the work of a historian.

In his book *Closing the Reading Gap*, Alex Quigley explores the idea of 'reading with a subject lens'. He illustrates this idea by explaining that a geographer, for example, may be processing a text from political, environmental, social and economic perspectives. The way in which we intend to tackle a text can have a huge impact on our understanding of that text. Quigley explains that by allocating 'roles and goals' for reading we can scaffold the text for pupils and allow them to hone in on the appropriate information rather than be overwhelmed by the entirety of the text.

What does this mean for the curriculum and teaching in classrooms?

This idea of disciplinary literacy demonstrates how we can (a) make meaningful connections across subjects; and (b) reinforce learning across the curriculum. For example, a primary practitioner can make connections between the skills we practice in our reading lessons e.g. summarising key ideas to our history lesson, where we may summarise two key sources to evaluate its validity and reliability. In addition to this, we can reinforce key skills by exploring the same skill across different contexts, which we know strengthens learning. For example, encouraging pupils to ask questions about a given text across both reading and history lessons will reinforce both their intermediate literacy but also their disciplinary literacy skills.

Reading to develop cultural literacy – E. D. Hirsch – key research

In *Cultural Literacy*, E. D. Hirsch asserts the need for pupils to develop a breadth of required knowledge in order for them to access subsequent knowledge. Hirsch wrote this book after observing that his undergraduate students were unable to comprehend and interpret paragraphs about the American Revolution because they simply did not have the background knowledge to do so. He stresses the need for pupils to be taught a set of 'common' knowledge so that they can more readily understand what is assumed to be understood at university level.

> We know instinctively that to understand what somebody is saying, we have to understand more than the surface meaning of words; we have to understand the context as well.

What does this mean for the curriculum and teaching in classrooms?

The implications of this idea are far-reaching and certainly not confined to academics alone. To understand and relate to the world that we live in, we need sufficient 'cultural capital' and in order to develop this, we need knowledge. The National Curriculum presents us with the

expectations around this knowledge but when individual schools map out the roadmap of specific knowledge in the form of units of study, they need to consider whether it provides pupils with the cultural literacy to access further knowledge.

Cultural literacy could be interpreted as global, national or local and these hold individual value. Pupils may learn for example, about World War Two, and the impact this event had globally. They may learn how the government supported the war effort nationally. They may learn about how their home town was affected by the war. But knowing these things together provides a richer understanding and tapestry of the past and reinforce personal historical identity as well as placing this in a wider historical context.

Reading to develop emotional literacy – key research

Emotional literacy is the ability to self-regulate, understand and express our emotions and traverse our emotional worlds. American psychologist Daniel Goleman argued that we should systematically teach pupils self-awareness, self-management, empathy and social skills. He also explored the impact that these behaviours can have on academic performance: 'Executive function, mediated by the pre-frontal lobe in the brain, both manage emotions but also helps you pay attention.' In a meta-analysis of schools that adopted emotional intelligence programmes, it was found that anti-social behaviour (disruption in class etc) went down by 10% with academic achievement scores increasing by 11%. This study demonstrates that as pupils develop their emotional literacy, their ability to learn improves.

What does this mean for the curriculum and teaching in classrooms?

This concept of emotional literacy can very much be embedded across the curriculum and not just through PSHE or citizenship programs of study. A culture of prioritising these skills in general across a school can open the door for emotional literacy to permeate every subject (where appropriate!). For example, what better opportunity is there to explore

courage and resilience than when exploring Tolkien's seminal novel *The Hobbit*? Not only will the exploration deepen the pupils' understanding of the text, it will also facilitate discussion around how we can respond in the face of adversity. We will explore this concept in more detail in a chapter on character education.

Reading for pleasure – key research

Reading for pleasure serves many purposes but, before we get into the key research, let's talk about the most important one: the love of an age-old tradition and the absolute ultimate source of knowledge – books. That thirst for reading, for alternative perspectives, for broadened horizons, cannot be taught, but absolutely can be cultivated and facilitated and if we can all do one thing to improve the quality of the education we provide, it should be this.

Clark and DeZoya (2011) found a significant positive relationship between enjoyment and attainment, indicating that pupils who read more are also better readers. And the even more promising research headline? The OECD reported that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status. Therefore, if anything is going to close that disadvantaged gap, it's going to be reading.

What does this mean for the curriculum and teaching in classrooms?

In terms of curriculum design, this could prompt a number of choices for a school, but the common premise is ensuring reading is a central feature of the curriculum. This will lead to better outcomes and by that I don't just refer to academic success. I also refer to some of the above-mentioned ideas: better emotional literacy, better cultural literacy and, most importantly, a joy and a thirst for acquiring knowledge and learning. These, of course, have further implications for learning motivation.

If reading is prioritised within a school, it's pretty hard to miss within the classroom. It's visible, it's tangible and there's a certain 'magic' in the

air (cheesy as it sounds). Children are talking about books, teachers are reading books, pupils can't put books down. reading corners are full to the brim with books old and new. Books aren't only restricted to reading lessons but are explored in humanities lessons, arts lessons and even in physical education (*The Bright and Bold Human Body* by Izzie Howell, to illustrate what our hearts are doing when we are physically active, if you don't believe me!).

When we were going about designing our school curriculum, we decided we wanted to prioritise reading by having a selection of core-texts central to each unit of learning. We, for example, had the beautifully illustrated *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, as a core text on our unit about 'Diversity', with geography and history links looking at geographical place comparisons and exploring The Windrush, arts links exploring the illustrations and practising sketch techniques, and music links exploring how music has evolved over time.

A particularly important word of warning here – connections across the curriculum only strengthen learning if they meaningfully connect content. Content connected with tenuous links not only weakens understanding but can sometimes dilute knowledge altogether. More on this in the next chapter.

Expert Insight from Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs
Head of Early Years, Ark

Babies are born ready to learn. In fact, they have already started listening and responding in the womb. Once born, babies recognise voices and familiar songs, rhymes or tunes that they heard inside their mother's tummy.

These listening skills are fundamental in helping babies understand the world around them. Using their senses, babies begin the 'serve and return' of interaction with caregivers: dad smiles, baby smiles, dad

giggles, baby gurgles and so on. These responses between caregiver and child are the building blocks of communication leading to speaking and they are the earliest manifestations of comprehension.

When I think of learning to read, I think of it as completely interwoven with these earliest experiences. While sitting on a parent's lap to look at a book together, a baby is enveloped in the warmth, smell and security of that familiar adult and begins developing, even at this earliest stage, a love of reading linked to their love of this joyful experience and contact.

Young children build concepts of print through these experiences of being read to and their own developing interest in picking up, looking at and handling books. When children are read to and sung to from the start of life, their first words are often stolen from the repetitive phrases of familiar stories or songs. For example 'Row, row' from the nursery rhyme 'Row, row, row your boat' or 'Swishy, swashy, swishy, swashy' from Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury's seminal *We're going on a bear hunt*. Quickly, children acquire more and more speech and they use their words to tell stories e.g. saying the flow of words that match the pictures as they turn each page of a book, asking questions about the characters, the pictures and the words or telling their own stories both anecdotal and imaginative.

As children grow older but still in infancy, they begin to show interest in print as well as pictures, particularly if it is pointed out and relevant to them. By showing a child their name on items they own or when signing a card, a child will build an affinity to the letter shapes and the sounds that they make. I often hear two- and three-year-olds spot the first letter of their name and say 'Look, that's my letter.' It is the coming together of these foundational entities that make learning to read natural and congruent. Here we have all the pieces of the puzzle: love of reading, comprehension, speech and decoding each developing not in isolation but in combination with one another from the start.

Practical strategies and top tips

Short-term

- Think about how your curriculum prioritises and promotes reading. Is reading a central facet of the school's curriculum? What do teachers think? Parents? Pupils? Establishing this is important for carving out how to get to this place.

Practical strategies and top tips
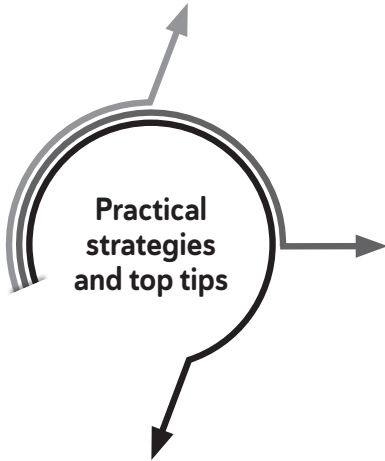
Medium-term

- Find ways of immersing pupils in reading as much and as meaningfully as you can. Whether that be having central texts to units of study, or deciding as a school what body of texts you want pupils to have experiences as part of your curriculum offer. Concretely define and commit to this. Map these out and give your teachers ample time to get to know these texts - they define you as a school and no one likes last-minute cramming

Long-term

- Review your literature spine and keep track of how books were experienced by pupils. How can pedagogy around teaching be tweaked to ensure challenging texts are digestible and accessible to all pupils? More on this in the next chapter on an inclusive curriculum.

Expert Insight from Alex Quigley
Author of 'Closing the Reading Gap'

Reading skill opens the doors to a powerful primary school curriculum. You can have a beautifully sequenced curriculum, bursting with rich knowledge and experiences, but if a pupil cannot read, they simply cannot access it. It is tantamount to buying a fantastic new Ferrari, but not possessing the key.

Reading more in the school week will likely help. Many schools carve out time in the school day to develop independent reading, with the aim of fostering 'reading for pleasure' and enriching and broadening the curriculum offer. And yet, simply reading more will prove necessary but insufficient. It is vital that every teacher also unlocks the dense, often tacit, vocabulary, text features and structures, that make up most of the tricky texts read by their pupils when they read as part of a history topic or a local geography project. For example, when a year 5 pupil reads an informational text about the local population, they need to be both highly knowledgeable and strategic. With skilled explicit teaching of reading, every pupil can be taught so the curriculum is truly unlocked.

Importantly, for the pupils who need it most in our schools, a necessary focus on teaching reading will include close attention to pupils who have existing reading barriers. Whether it is pupils struggling with dysfluency, poor comprehension or dyslexia, teachers need to be trained in supporting pupils to surmount such reading barriers. And in so doing, our efforts to open the doors of a rich curriculum for every pupil is more likely to succeed.

References

Department for Education, (2012) 'Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure' Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284286/reading_for_pleasure.pdf [Accessed May 2020]

Goleman, D (1996) *Working with Emotional Intelligence.* Bloomsbury. Taylor RD, Oberle E, Durlak JA, Weissberg RP. (2017) Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects. Child Dev. Retrieved from: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28685826/ [Accessed May 2020]

Hirsch, E. D. (1988) *Cultural Literacy: What every American needs to know.* Random House USA Inc; 1st Vintage Books ed edition (1 May 1988)

Quigley, A (2020) *Closing the Reading Gap.* Routledge; 1 edition (2 April 2020)

Shanahan T. & Shanahan C. (2008) 'Teaching Disciplinary Literacy to Adolescents: Rethinking Content Area Literacy' Retrieved from: http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7539/urlt/Mod4-TDLS.pdf [Accessed May 2020]

Chapter four

Character education and the curriculum

'Intelligence plus character –
that is the goal of true education'
– Martin Luther King Jr.

The African proverb 'it takes a village to raise a child' is one that comes to mind as we touch upon the importance that character education holds in the pursuit of a broad and balanced curriculum. In developing character (defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary as 'one of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual'), it is not parents alone who play a part. The significant amount of time that children spend at school reinforces the importance of ensuring that character development permeates throughout the curriculum and is just as well-thought-out as English, maths or history.

Expert Insight from Dr Tom Harrison and Rachael Hunter
Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues,
University of Birmingham

Although the term 'character education' may be unfamiliar to many practitioners, we believe that it has always been at the centre of a primary education which is committed to developing the whole child. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues defines character education as 'all the explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people to develop positive personal character strengths or virtues'. We believe that these strengths or virtues are teachable and that their development is central to a flourishing life. Examples of positive personal character strengths, or virtues, include honesty, courage, perseverance and compassion – traits that all primary school teachers seek to cultivate in their pupils. Through our experience of working with hundreds of schools across the country, we know that character education can look vastly different and can happen in moments, both planned and unplanned, throughout the day. We believe that effective character education can be 'caught' through the ethos of the school and the example of others, it can be 'taught' through a formal curriculum, assemblies or 'teachable moments' and, eventually, it will be 'sought' by the children as they take ownership of their own learning.

In the above definition of character education, I think the use of explicit and implicit is something to note. Character education isn't a singular lesson, isn't only confined to PSHE or 'Circle Time', but can be incorporated into every aspect of the curriculum. Most often teachers develop this aspect incidentally e.g. exploring the concept of friendship when exploring the timeless classic *The Wind in the Willows*, but when considered at a whole school level and mapped out intentionally, it can ensure pupils are given multiple opportunities over time to grapple with complex social concepts and ideals and begin to exercise these values and

virtues more readily in their day-to-day lives. Let's explore the benefits that can be seen from this approach.

Character education and the impact on behaviour

There is, quite unsurprisingly, an established link between the use of character education programmes within a curriculum and displays of more positive behaviour. (Thompson, 2002). In a qualitative study conducted by William Thompson (East State Tennessee University), it was found that 7 out of 10 pupils who took part in a study exploring an integrated character development approach to curriculum, showed improvements in behaviour (based on disciplinary incidences) and all teachers credited the use of a behaviour policy that was rooted in character development.

It is widely agreed that sound and secure behaviour management is a central feature of an effective classroom but how the dialogue and exchanges teachers and pupils have around character can support this is, in my eyes, less well known. Let's consider this by exploring a common scenario in the classroom:

Classroom scenario:

A pupil misbehaves. A teacher quite rightly frustrated by the disruption to the lesson and learning attempts to correct the behaviour. The undesirable behaviour continues so the teacher, in line with the school's behaviour policy, issues a sanction to correct said behaviour and explains explicitly that the behaviour is unacceptable. The child's behaviour escalates further until the situation brings learning to an entire and complete halt. The child is frustrated and all they can see is the sanction and the 'unfairness' of it.

It's this last bit where character education can be of use. First, through the modelling of compassion and empathy – the understanding of the teacher that something more is at play here than just the behaviour; that

this is a communication of a need, an emotion, a feeling. And although this doesn't excuse the behaviour and the behaviour sanctions should still be consistently applied, it's in the dialogue that precedes this where we can lever the power of character and see this as an opportunity for learning outside the academic realm.

A conversation around what prompted the behaviour, the alternative perspectives on the behaviour and an acceptance or ownership of the behaviour can help pupils develop a skill set that will serve them well beyond their years in education, and better prepare them to develop their ability to both make and sustain relationships.

Character education and the impact on learning motivation

The old adage goes that 'you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink' – this for me sums up the learning motivation challenges that we as educators have all faced at one point or another. How can we get our pupils motivated to learn? And how does character education play into this?

The example below comes from my own teaching practice and highlights how both implicit and explicit character education can have positive impact on learning.

Classroom Scenario

I used to teach a pupil who had an incredibly challenging home life. He was constantly told he was no good at home and this was something that has persisted as an attitude he very much held about himself. This attitude, of course, came through his academic pursuits too. He was convinced he was unable to meet the expectations of any task and would often, as children do, avoid the task altogether or give up before he had even started. It was crucial for me, as his teacher, to give him the opportunity to be successful so he could develop a) some self-belief;

and b) some resilience to try in the first place. So, one day, as the class settled down to get on with their independent task in mathematics, we sat together, and we had a chat about it. 'What is it about this task that worries you?' 'What makes you think you can't do it?' 'What's the worst that could happen if you gave it a go?' 'How can I help you get started'. So, as many teachers do, we sat and worked through the first few questions together and I gradually withdrew my support, much like a parent teaching a child how to ride their bike. Nothing revolutionary here. But we had that conversation A LOT. That process happening A LOT. Consistently. Over and over. And of course, some days he was having absolutely none of it. But over time … things began to change. I would casually leave the worked example of the question in front of him and walk away claiming that 'I had to go quickly work with another child – can you do me a favour get started and I'll join you…' Soon, he began to get on with it and started getting the questions correctly, unsupported. First taste of success. Of course, we made a huge fuss out of him. We gave him shout outs, we 'whoop whooped' and I joked that he could take over my job and start teaching the lesson. Later down the line, I didn't give him the option to give up and refuse. I referred back to what he had already unveiled to himself and me – that he, in fact, did have self-belief and *could* exercise resilience.

Developing these traits in this pupil in my class was not about him getting better test scores and was more than just academics. But they allowed him to access the academics that, when paired with this new developing sense of self-belief and resilience, would give him the tools to further improve his confidence and also to achieve his aspirations.

It's one of those beautiful moments in teaching when there are multiple learning opportunities. This is an example of what, in my eyes, is one of the very definitions of a 'rich' curriculum – one that simultaneously cultivates knowledge (a fact such as when the Battle of Hastings was), but also knowledge of one's self.

Character education through subjects

Intellectual Virtues

Character traits necessary for discernment, right action and the pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding.

Examples:

autonomy; critical thinking; curiosity; judgement; reasoning; reflection; resourcefulness.

Moral Virtues

Character traits that enable us to act well in situations that require an ethical response.

Examples:

compassion; courage; gratitude; honesty; humility; integrity; justice; respect.

Civic Virtues

Character traits that are necessary for engaged responsible citizenship, contributing to the common good.

Examples:

citizenship; civility; community awareness; neighbourliness; service; volunteering.

Performance Virtues

Character traits that have an instrumental value in enabling the intellectual, moral and civic virtues.

Examples:

confidence; determination; motivation; perseverance; resilience; teamwork.

Practical Wisdom is the integrative virtue, developed through experience and critical reflection, which enables us to perceive, know, desire and act with good sense. This includes discerning, deliberative action in situations where virtues collide.

Flourishing individuals and society

Adapted from: The Jubilee Centre, University of Birmingham (2017)

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (The University of Birmingham) has carried out extensive research on how character can translate through the curriculum and how best we as educationalists can facilitate that process. In their research report, 'Knightly Values', they focus on how values and virtues can be taught through literature. They created a programme for primary school children aged 9–11 that involved teaching character through a group of selected stories. 5000 pupils from over 100 schools took part in the programme to measure the impact this had on the development of both good moral character and, subsequently, behaviour. The research highlighted that the Knightly Virtual Programme improved the behaviour of pupils as observed by their parents, staff and themselves and significantly increased the pupil's ability to apply virtue language and articulate themselves using it. Simply put, stories and literature acted as a vehicle to develop character in pupils.

The beauty of this was in the way character values and virtues had been embedded and taught in the context of classics such as *Don Quixote* and *The Merchant of Venice* –seminal works of literature which have shaped and forged the evolution of literature. They have not only aided cultural capital and developed pupils' ability in an academic sense, but have been distilled to explicitly explore character; no additional 'Character Hour' and another lesson on the timetable, but taught through an English lesson and allowing pupils to make multiple gains.

So, what might this look like in the classroom? We took this concept and applied it to our teaching by mapping out our literature spine and balancing out the richness, challenge and quality of the texts with the opportunities the text provided us to delve into a 'character concept'. An example: *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien – the tale of a daring young creature who defies the odds and goes against his usual risk-averse nature to go on a treacherous quest battling multiple enemies in order to reclaim a kingdom. It is a perfect opportunity to look at humans' capacity to be courageous. When we are teaching reading, we model decoding, fluency, and how to infer. But how do we model courage? Well, courage isn't an

act that necessarily needs to be as gravity-defying as slaying mythical dragons to save a kingdom. It can be shown in small acts. We can model our courage to try something new in the classroom as teachers. 'Today I'm going to try to something new and exercise some courage' you might tell the class – and the explicit dialogue around this is vital. However, offering further 'models' through literary protagonists, for example, gives pupils multiple reference points to build the idea of 'courage' up in their minds. A pertinent analogy for this would be a jigsaw puzzle. As we provide pupils with more reference points (pieces of the puzzle), the clarity of the concept emerges and sharpens, giving pupils a deeper understanding of this trait, and more importantly how they can apply it to their daily lives. The idea around modelling these characteristics is also one of note. Children do as they see, not as they're told, so regularly modelling small acts of kindness, courage and empathy, for example, sends a really strong message about how these values are educable and can be lived. People may naturally behave in this way but making it more intentionally visible to pupils and capitalising on opportunities to stimulate a discussion around navigating our social worlds can give the pupils an equally important education in how to live well.

References

Thompson, W. G. (2002) 'The Effects of Character Education on Student Behaviour'. Retrieved from: https://dc.etsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1863&context=etd [Accessed March 2020]

Jubilee Centre, University of Birmingham (2017) 'A Framework for Character Education in Schools'. Retrieved from: https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/character-education/Framework%20for%20Character%20Education.pdf [Accessed February 2020]

Chapter five

Curriculum implementation: five fundamental foundations

Teaching is a strategic act of engagement'
– James A. Bellanca

There is an increasing breadth of research about how to teach effectively and I am a strong believer that teaching is somewhat of an art as well as a science. The melting pot of teacher skill, expertise and knowledge means that pupils in classrooms across the country are flourishing within the wider context of their school's curriculum and are able to use this as a springboard for their subsequent education and in meeting their eventual goals and dreams. I won't naively claim to reduce this craft down into a mere five points but below I mark out what I feel are five fundamentals for sound delivery of the curriculum; five elements of teaching and learning that are recurring themes from excellent and exciting lessons I've been privileged enough to experience and ones that I feel need to become staples when it comes to professional development. These are concepts that teachers would benefit exploring, revisiting discussing and engaging with on an ongoing basis. This doesn't factor in subject-specific pedagogy but rather looks at overarching umbrella concepts that are all-important in ensuring that as a school you are able to 'walk the walk' as well as 'talk the talk' when it comes to delivering a learning journey. Each area is broken down into a)

why is it important? and b) what does it look/feel like in a classroom? In this chapter, there is a lesser focus on the research itself and more of a focus on how these different elements translate into action in the classroom. I compared teaching to an art and much like art it can be subjective and quite often intangible, but I hope the latter part of each section will illuminate this overarching concept and make the intangible slightly more tangible.

1. Behaviour for learning

Behaviour for learning is the foundation of any effective classroom and any sort of behaviour disruptions, be it low-level or more significant, means that your pupils will not be able to collectively enjoy the fruits of your labour in terms of a well-intentioned and mindfully designed curriculum. Getting the behaviour tone and tenor right in your classroom allows you to see your curriculum vision through to fruition and creates an altogether more harmonious atmosphere.

What does this look like in the classroom?

A classroom where behaviour for learning is securely in place feels … productive, comfortable, collaborative and generally … happy. There is a distinct 'buzz' for knowledge that can be felt in pertinent conversation around the learning and this unrestricted 'buzz' is a product of classroom routines that are so stringently in place; it opens up the pupils' ability to feel confident in asserting their role as a learner within these defined boundaries. Boundaries flex just enough to include laughter and joy for learning (which we will come onto), impromptu learning discussion and other (what may be seen as…) off-task activities BECAUSE of the culture that has been established in the classroom. It's also very easy to see that it is a genuine culture of the classroom as opposed to an orchestrated 'show' because pupils are so used to engaging in this kind of learning environment. The teacher is confident in tightening and loosening these 'reins' and frequently reminds pupils of the boundaries through repetition of rituals and routines (which leads to the ongoing boundaries being effective over time). The teacher is not after 'control' of the classroom but rather wants

to play the role of facilitator of the learning, often taking a step back from being the epicentre of the classroom. This could be as subtle as standing on the peripheries of the classroom to enable pupils to collaborate and 'take centre stage' but could also include strategies such as frequently inviting pupils to become the 'epicentre' e.g. pupils coming to the whiteboard to teach the class a concept or 'become the teacher'. Behaviour for learning isn't necessarily separated from learning conversations and the two very much come hand in hand – 'right, we're about to walk around the classroom to collect our ideas in this silent debate activity, so we need to remember to be respectful and aware of each other's personal space as we walk around the classroom'. This kind of ongoing dialogue and commentary shows that the teacher has an awareness of potential pitfalls in terms of behaviour as lessons progress and mitigates against these, adopting a 'prevention is better than cure' approach to behaviour escalations. Pupils are frequently reminded of the 'why'. Why positive behaviour is necessary and important for productive learning and what the implications are when we move away from this. When things do go wrong, as they often will (and that's absolutely ok!), this is used an opportunity for further learning, 'case review' style, to allow pupils to think about the practical application of the code of conduct within the classroom and serve as important reminders for the classroom 'community'. The teacher's tone is often calm and consistent and carries with it an expectation that their requests will be met with respectful compliance. Respect being the operative word. The teacher-pupil relationship is rooted in mutual respect and, equally importantly, empathy, and this is explicitly and often frequently shared: 'I know we've been doing lots of independent writing for an extended time now and we must be getting tired, so five more minutes and we'll take a brain break together.' Pupils feel nurtured and cared for as well as feeling they are developing as scholars.

2. Knowledge transfer – pedagogical approaches

It is an incredibly exciting time to be in education and we are in a truly fortunate position as educationalists to have so much exposure to a breadth of developing research around knowledge transfer,

particularly from the field of cognitive science. The science of learning has had some important implications on the pedagogical approaches we adopt as teachers in the classrooms and research into memory has shown us the value of consistently applying these strategies to secure knowledge transfer.

What does this look like in the classroom?

A classroom where knowledge is carefully selected, made digestible, transferred and subsequently secured, is a classroom where 'progress' in the form of knowledge retention is seen in every single lesson. Teachers in these knowledge-rich classrooms are able to carefully pick out the key concepts underling any given lesson and focus on securing these rather than providing pupils with an overwhelmingly large amount of information and hoping something sticks. Teachers in these classrooms carefully consider the cognitive load of the lesson and ensure they present information in a way that eases processing and limits cognitive overload. In these classrooms, Assessment for Learning (which we'll come on to next) is a key and ongoing feature throughout the lesson and acts as a diagnostic for teachers to decide which key concepts need further elaboration and exploration. In these classrooms, pupils and teachers collaborate to place new knowledge in the context of prior knowledge and connected knowledge. Repetition and rehearsal is a part of every lesson with learning from yesterday, last week and last term constantly being referred to cement knowledge and to ensure knowledge is transferred to the long-term memory store. Teachers in these classrooms create a culture of learning that ensures pupil feel safe and confident making mistakes, asking questions and clarifying their thinking and understanding. They do this through intentionally modelling error – 'ah silly me, I've forgotten to add in the capital letter, great thing I proofread my sentence!' –and by celebrating error – 'by making that error we've now learnt ____' – to normalise error as a means to learning. They also incorporate novel ways to introduce and engage pupils in material to promote learning motivation and ensure pupils secure semantic memories of the knowledge they have acquired.

3. Assessment for learning and knowing your pupils

Knowing our pupils is the most important part of our jobs as educators. This isn't just confined to knowing them academically but knowing them as a person. Knowing a pupil's interests, passions, aspirations and even their pet peeves is not only a huge privilege for us as teachers but one of the best parts of our jobs. This knowledge of our pupils helps to not only shape them as academics but helps us shape them as individuals too (as further explored in the chapter around character education). In this part of the book, however, we'll be thinking about 'knowing the child' in the context of teaching and learning specifically. Assessment for learning is all about checking in with our pupils to gauge where their understanding lies on a continuum and then using this information to shape subsequent learning. Assessment for learning can be small acts as easy as a quick 'show me' on whiteboards or can be larger pieces of 'data' such as summative assessment from an end of unit test. Together these pieces of information paint a picture of what pupils know and what they need to further secure, which acts as a vital blueprint for the design of subsequent lessons and units of study.

What does this look like in the classroom?

A classroom where assessment for learning is woven into the fabric of each lesson is one that is pacey (not quick-pacey but purposeful-pacey) and is responsive at all turns. It's one where the road map for the learning has been carefully planned out but bumps in the road have been anticipated, accounted for and mitigated against. In this vein, teachers navigate the lesson similar to diagnosticians – assessing pupils understanding in multiple ways and responding to this 'data'. Teachers operate on the premise that at any given point in the lesson, they would be able to provide you with a defined list of exactly which pupils have secured knowledge and which are yet to secure it. Teachers have a toolkit of ways of finding this out: over-the-shoulder glances, quick quizzes, 'show me' on the whiteboard and through discussion (and sometimes even picking up on pupils' bemused facial expressions!). Teachers who are skilled in this often have sticky notes or bits of paper to hand to jot

down names of pupils or subsequent strategies that need to be employed to close that gap. Classroom layout is often a consideration in classrooms that employ strategic and incisive assessment for learning. Pupils are often collaboratively working on tasks set specifically for them and have been grouped mindfully so that they can support one another in reaching a mutually defined learning goal. Teaching assistants in the classroom move seamlessly with the teacher/pupils and it is often quite difficult to distinguish the class teacher with the adult supporting because they are both engaged fully in securing a learning goal with either whole groups or individual pupils. These lessons often have impromptu mini-plenaries where misconceptions that 'pop up' are discussed and explored further to refine the learning and ensure understanding is crystal clear. Teachers in these classrooms are not afraid when lessons go wrong – in fact, they are usually quite open about this and engage in dialogue around how a) it has gone wrong; and b) how it will be addressed tomorrow, changing the path of subsequent learning based on learning that's gone before.

4. Making connections

Making connections is a crucial part of the curriculum, not only to draw together learning to reinforce its wider contextual meaning, but also to ensure learning is secured in pupils' long-term memories. Making connections can be broadly drawn into different categories: (a) making connections across time e.g. 'last term we learnt X and now we're learning Y'; (b) making connections across subjects e.g. 'in science we learnt about the different seasons and today in geography we're going to learn about how climate can act as a push/pull factor'; and (c) making connections within subjects e.g. 'when we learn about the Ancient Maya, we studied their various traditions. Today we're going to contrast that with the traditions of…' Making connections and building on learning ensures that the pupil's learning journey is sequential and allows pupils to activate their prior knowledge to engage in new learning.

What does this look like in the classroom?

In 'connection classrooms', learning past, present and future is constantly being referred to and referenced. Teachers will set out their stall by referring to prior learning that links and will explain how units of study will enable pupils to progress forward, giving it value and purpose within pupils' wider learning journeys. Pupils are encouraged to make connections of their own in these classrooms, with pupils often commenting how learning reminds them something from last term or even something from a previous academic year. Pupils share their own world knowledge and personal experiences to supplement and strengthen collective learning in the classroom and habits of discussion are embedded in the classroom, so this dialogue is a regular feature of lessons. Teachers explicitly explain where the lesson has come from and where it's going in order to reinforce the connectedness of the pupils' wider learning journey and the curriculum. Teachers carefully consider content and how it may need to be 'pinned' to prior learning in order to aid comprehension and true understanding. This is often planned in to ensure that learning is successful and that pupils gain more than a superficial level of understanding about a given topic.

5. Joy for learning

This is perhaps one of the most crucial elements when it comes to classroom exposition and is at the very heart of ensuring pupils develop a life-long love of learning. It is also quite often the reason why teachers become teachers in the first place. Joy for learning has implications for learning motivation and is associated with intrinsic motivation – a pupil's genuine fascination for a subject and their 'thirst' to discover more. It is this intrinsic motivation that drives pupils' learning forward.

What does this look like in the classroom?

A joyful classroom is hard to ignore! There is a genuine 'buzz' of learning that's almost tangible. Pupils and the teacher are heavily engrossed in the learning and the learning goals are clear to both

the teachers and the pupils. Pupils are motivated to engage in the learning, not because there is a reward at stake, but because a genuine interest in the subject has been cultivated. Pupils want to know more and ask questions (endless questions!) to find out as much as they possibly can. Time often flies in a joyful classroom and a culture of error means that pupils engage in learning fearlessly, understanding clearly that making mistakes and 'getting it wrong' is indeed the true nature of learning. Teachers in these classrooms exude a passion for their subject and model 'joy for learning' by showcasing the beauty of the subject. They invite pupils to share in this and they quickly identify pupils who are reluctant to engage in this and employ strategies to 'bring them along' with the class. This may be through humour, actively involving these pupils or providing these pupils with opportunities to engage on their terms by linking learning to an area of interest for them. A joyful classroom is the ultimate aim and ensures pupils educational experiences are positive and that in turn they develop an appreciation of knowledge and learning.

Expert Insight from Jon Hutchinson
Assistant Head, Reach Academy Feltham

On my first day as a proper teacher, I remember walking around the school and seeing just how beautiful everything looked. Display boards pristine and purposeful. Pencil pots full of sharpened, named equipment. Furniture clean, straight and ordered. "It looks amazing," I said to a more experienced teacher. "It is," she replied, "the only problem with schools is that the children come in and ruin everything." It was a warm-hearted gag, but like all good jokes, had a lot of truth in the jest. It's good to have a strong plan, to be organised. However, the glorious complexity of primary schools means that even the strongest plans can strain and buckle as they collide with the reality of small children.

Leaders and teachers across the country have spent many hours tightening curriculum intention, gaining real clarity over exactly what they want children to learn, when and how. But having a strong and clear plan is only one part of the jigsaw. Implementation is all, and the foundations set out in this chapter capture perfectly the conditions that need to be in place to give your plan the best chance of being realised. First, there really is little point talking about curriculum if behaviour routines are not strong. Often, strict routines are painted as being oppressive, or quashing creativity and autonomy. Of course, as all seasoned teachers know, the opposite is true. The clearer the boundaries are in the classroom, the more predictable the routines and consequences, the more fun you can have. The joy for learning foundation set out in this chapter really is a crucial part of any curriculum implementation, but there can be no joy from chaos.

Spending time supporting teachers to understand how children learn, and how to sequence and build sophisticated schemas of knowledge in pupils' heads is perhaps the most worthwhile investment that you can make. Curriculum should be viewed over years, not in chunks of six weeks. What follows from this is a curriculum plan that builds lesson on lesson, term on term, year on year. As a profession, we have begun to crack secrets of how to promote the long-term retention of knowledge and skills, alongside deeper and more abstract understanding of key concepts. Using evidence-informed instructional strategies in the delivery of the curriculum should be a non-negotiable in any school.

It's a tough job, of course it is, but following these five foundations will give you the best shot at making it work, even when reality hits.

Chapter six

The inclusive classroom

'Inclusion is based on the belief that students of all abilities have the right to an education that is, meaningful appropriate, and equivalent to that of their peers' – Nicole Eridics

The SEND Code of Practice (Jan 2015) states:

> All pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The National Curriculum Inclusion Statement states that teachers should set high expectations for every pupil, whatever their prior attainment. Teachers should use appropriate assessment to set targets which are deliberately ambitious. Potential areas of difficulty should be identified and addressed at the outset. Lessons should be planned to address potential areas of difficulty and to remove barriers to pupil achievement. In many cases, such planning will mean that pupils with SEN and disabilities will be able to study the full national curriculum.

Inclusion is about making the curriculum accessible to all and needs to be a key consideration from the point of curriculum design all the way through to curriculum delivery. In this chapter, we'll be exploring the moral purpose of inclusion within curriculum design and practical approaches to ensuring every classroom is an inclusive one.

Curriculum design – mapping out the learning journey

When designing and mapping out the learning journey or curriculum of your school, I strongly believe it's crucial to maintain a resolute attitude towards the idea of raising the bar for *all* of our pupils whilst ensuring *all* pupils have the necessary support and means to reach that bar. At this stage of the process, it's important not to misguidedly alter the architecture of the curriculum in order to make it 'easier' to access. Instead, we should maintain high aspirations for our pupils whilst keeping in mind that the structures and systems will need to be put into place to ensure every single pupil can engage in and access that curriculum. In mapping out the curriculum for your school, a commitment needs to be made to seeing it through to fruition in terms of making the learning inclusive, both theoretically and practically.

Inclusion not only concerns those pupils with special educational needs and disability but also concerns pupils who are disadvantaged, pupils who have English as an Additional Language and, simply put, pupils who have any barrier to learning. It is our moral obligation as educators to guarantee access to a high-quality education to all learners and to be unswerving in our aim of closing the gap for any pupil who falls behind.

Planning and preparation

Inclusion of all pupils should be an ongoing thought during the planning and preparation phase of teaching. As mentioned previously, it's about absolute equity for all pupils. In order to achieve this, it's important to use planning time to wisely to consider how we can scaffold material for pupils so that despite their starting points or the barriers they may be facing when it comes to learning, they too can succeed in securing the flightpath set out. CPD for teachers may be required for teachers around this as it is a skill that needs to be developed and quite often improves over time as teachers interact with pupils of all kinds and begin to grasp the subtle nuances of differentiating material. So, what actually is differentiation and how can it be done effectively so that we can improve outcomes for all pupils? Differentiation is all about adapting content for the need of individual

pupils and scaffolding is HOW we do this e.g. through sentence frames, worked examples, visual aids or word banks. Let's look at an example from the English classroom. You are planning a writing lesson and the outcome you're hoping for is a paragraph describing a winter's scene. You have 30 pupils in the class and a wide spread of abilities and, even within that spread, you have pupils who naturally will excel at this content and those that will struggle with it. You're thinking ahead to the lesson and although you can anticipate who these pupils might be, you won't know until you teach the actual lesson. So, what can you do to ensure your planning and preparation for the lesson ensures that every single child, despite their confidence in this particular task, despite the barriers they may have to their learning, will be successful in completing this description?

Below is the step-by-step process you might go through in order to get there:

1. Consider the learning outcome – what skills are required?
2. Consider the skill –anticipate the common misconception. How will you mitigate this AHEAD of time?
3. Consider how you will present learning (see pedagogy reflections below)
4. Consider the modifications to learning – how could you modify learning materials or provide additional learning support when pupils are struggling with grasping the skill?
5. Create support resources/modify learning materials and review – will these scaffolds help the pupil get there? Are they providing support or doing it for them? Are they encouraging the pupils to 'meet you halfway'?

Lesson exposition

The lesson is here! Your scaffolds are prepared, the outcome is clear, and a strong model has laid the groundwork in securing understanding. Word of warning – don't make assumptions about what your pupils can and

cannot do. Boxing pupils into broad ability groups and assuming they will need a scaffold is dangerous territory. Despite the barrier to learning pupils may be facing, their confidence and ability to grasp and secure individual content within a subject is variable and dependent on a number of factors. Have your learning support strategies and scaffolds at the ready but employ them as and when you need them. Assessment for learning will help you navigate this and effectively employ those strategies in the right places. You may wish to pop some sentence starters on the table in front of a pupil who is a reluctant writer and struggles with getting started ahead of the lesson, but equally you may offer this scaffold to another pupil who may happen to be your best writer who's not confident with setting descriptions and is equally struggling to get started. Fluid differentiation in this way will mean that your assumption is that every pupil can achieve the desired outcome, it's just that some will need a little help along the way. Framing learning as a challenge can also support inclusion: 'I've got a real challenge for you today … something which professional authors struggle with all the time. Can we write a wintery setting description to pull our reader into the story and really make them feel like they are there?' 'Let's have a read of Sarah's description – has it pulled us in?' Giving activities and tasks a real purpose can reinforce a collective drive for success. As subtle as these strategies may be and as much as they may not seem directly linked to inclusion, this multi-faceted approach to inclusion can make a real difference for our pupils.

Reflecting on pedagogy: inclusive practice

HOW we teach is just as an important consideration to WHAT we teach and our pedogeological practices need to be considered when we are trying to create inclusive and effective classrooms. Below are some practical strategies centered around pedagogy which can support inclusion and more importantly can be embedded so that they form a part of quality first teaching practice.

Dual coding

Expert Insight from Oliver Caviglioli
Author of 'Dual Coding with Teachers'

There's a real but unacknowledged communication problem in classrooms. The explanations students receive from their teachers is overwhelmingly linear; that is to say, contained in sentences either spoken or written. Yet students' schemas are organised — so say cognitive psychologists — in a networked, non-linear fashion. Dual coding, or more prosaically, the use of diagrams, provides students with a non-linear presentation of knowledge that is more akin to their schemas. As such it makes the new information more accessible by being more meaningful. Psychologist Fiorella and Mayer, in their 2015 book *Learning As A Generative Activity*, point out that the boundary conditions of visual teaching strategies are beneficial to all students but particularly those they term as having 'lower prior knowledge'. Diagrams, then, make the curriculum more available to all students. There is no specialised type of knowledge that cannot be depicted and communicated in diagrammatic fashion, eliminating obstructions to its access.

Interleaving and interweaving material

Expert Insight from Mark Enser
Head of Geography and Research Lead at Heathfield Community College and author of 'Teach Like Nobody's Watching'.

The term *interleaving* is often confused with that of *spacing*. Usually, in the research literature, interleaving refers to teaching two easily confused concepts side by side so as to draw out their differences. For example, an art teacher my interleave the teaching of Monet and Manet by teaching both in the same lesson and switching between the two artists to compare their technique, subject and medium etc. Likewise, a geographer might interleave the teaching of two hazard case studies to help pupils contrast them.

However, when many people talk about *interleaving* they seem to actually mean *spacing*. This is a technique that is distinct from blocked practice. In blocked practice you study one topic, when *spacing* you move between different topics. This is more often used as a revision technique than a way of learning something new. Spacing your history curriculum by teaching the history of medicine on a Monday, the causes of the Second World War on a Wednesday, and the impact of the civil rights movement on Thursday, is unlikely to lead to anything but confusion. However, once studied, this might be a useful way to revise these topics. It introduces a *desirable difficulty* and requires greater concentration as you move between them.

A final thing to consider here is what I would term *interweaving*. This is the term I would use for threading synoptic links between topics and returning to those things that were studied before. For example, in geography, we might study tectonics at the start of

Year 8, then return to it when looking at East Africa and then return again when exploring barriers to development in Haiti. This content is not *interleaved*, as it does not involve teaching contrasting material side by side, but there are elements of spacing and retrieval practice built in. It also helps pupils to see the big picture of our subjects as the various threads come together.

Although all pupils will benefit from the opportunities to revisit prior learning, this may be most important for those who struggle with working memory capacity. Everyone's working memory is limited, but there will be a great deal of variation within a class. If we can draw things out of our long-term memory, we need to hold less new information in our working memory and this makes it easier for us apply this information in interesting ways.

Practical strategies and top tips

Short-term

- Consider individual pupils and spot check their access, engagement and success across the curriculum. Audit the systems and processes that may strengthen and support teachers' understanding of inclusive teaching and learning e.g. co-planning session with subject leads and inclusion teams so that they can practice implementing strategies and reviewing their impact.
- Have regular inclusion best practice meets with staff to disseminate great practice and join up theory and practical strategies.

Practical strategies and top tips
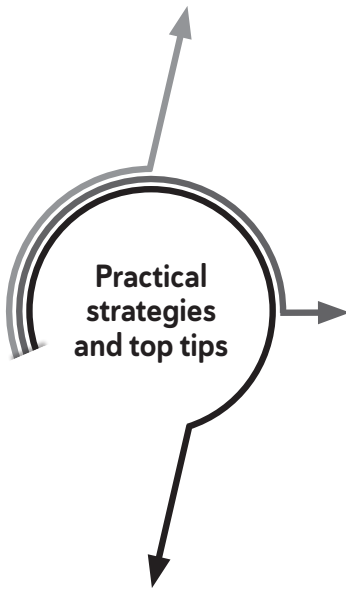
Medium-term

- Consider the whole school inclusion strategy. This, of course, will go beyond teaching and learning alone and will consider much wider implications e.g. parental engagement and how inclusive the curriculum is e.g. how representative is the school's literature spine and to what extent does it allow pupils to consider varying perspectives and promote respect and diversity?
- Collect qualitative data from the pupils to get an insight into what they see as the barriers to their learning and how we as teachers can improve our practice.
- Put in place a CPD structure that gives teachers ample space and time to engage in reflecting on pedagogy and how to refine their teaching practice to support inclusion and quality first teaching.

Long-term

- Inclusion systems and models can be embedded into everyday practice to ensure that there is a consistent and ongoing approach to inclusion across the curriculum e.g. regular pupil progress reviews which are centred around individual pupils and providing teachers with specific training for individual need.
- Adopt a 'lesson study' style approach where teachers can share 'impact research' to see the medium and long-term impact of employing particular strategies consistently over a given period of time.

Chapter seven

Curriculum Kaizen – continual improvement

'Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection'
– Mark Twain

Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy and mindset centred around making continual improvement. Most notably, it's been applied to the automotive industry where car manufacturers such as Ford and Toyota have used the Kaizen philosophy to improve productivity, reduce waste and improve the quality of their products. There are various elements of the Kaizen approach that have been employed in these industries, but a few that I think are pertinent and could be applied to curriculum design and in particular ongoing curriculum improvement are the ideas of 'quality circles' and the heavy emphasis on teamwork. In this chapter we will be looking at how we can incorporate these into the curriculum review process, what different aspects may influence curriculum review and how the ongoing iterations of our curriculum can help us to strive and ultimately achieve excellence.

Curriculum design and delivery is very much a long game. Yes, we can implement a new curriculum and have it up and running (and this in itself may take years) but as we continue to deliver the curriculum, opportunities and challenges arise. It's also important to consider that agency is key. We

don't want our curriculum to be so fluid that our overall offer changes drastically over time and the defined flightpath is lost but we also don't want to have such a rigid curriculum that the very people who deliver it feel they cannot engage and own it in such a way that it compromises the delivery of it anyway. This is a fine balance but one that's worth investing time in. Having an annual review process will allow you to take a step back and collectively look at what has worked well and what iteration you may want to make going forward so that the curriculum has the maximum impact possible on the pupils and means better outcomes for all. Enter the concept of the 'quality circles'…

Quality circles

Quality circles are a group of people within a particular trade, coming together regularly to discuss how they can improve a particular element of the outcome and tackling this collectively with the common goal of improvement. These 'think tank' style working parties can be incredibly effective in stress testing implementation of the curriculum. How might this work?

1. Survey Monkey to get anonymous feedback and to formulate trends on perceived strengths and areas of development for the curriculum.
2. Bring people together from across the school at every level to get multiple perspectives on key curriculum issues.
3. Share trends and pose a curriculum challenge question.
4. Pool suggestions and explore the benefits and barriers to each suggestion.

Collectively decide on a 'top two' – use this to guide the thinking when settling on a solution in light of the wider school priorities.

The curriculum of a school is the identity of a school. But the identity of a school is also forged by the amazing teachers and support staff that help deliver the curriculum. Quality circles ensure that these two things come together. How curriculum leads may envisage their vision coming to life

may not actually be the case so it's important to engage in meaningful discussion and dialogue with those on the ground regularly.

Research reviews

As educators we are privileged to live in an age where we have access to an ongoing stream of research that can help us inform our practice and improve learning outcomes. Research reviews can be incorporated into the curriculum review process to ensure that cutting-edge research is being shared, discussed and incorporated into both the design and implementation of the curriculum. Here are some excellent sources of research that bridge the gap between theory and practice and that can be used to support curriculum implementation:

- The Education Endowment Foundation –https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk – an education charity that offers research-based practical toolkits for schools.
- The Chartered College of Teaching – https://chartered.college/aboutus – a professional body for teachers that provides support and resources for schools and publishes a termly journal for members called *Impact*, which reviews the latest in educational research.
- ResearchED – https://researched.org.uk – educational conferences held globally, bringing together the leading thinkers in education.
- National Foundation for Educational Research – https://www.nfer.ac.uk – an independent organisation which shares research and insights to inform decision making in education.

Collaboration

The very best way to refine and perfect your curriculum is through collaboration, both across phases and across schools to see what has worked well and how best we can navigate the challenges that our individual schools face. The impact of cross-school collaboration is explored in the Department for Education's report entitled 'Effective school partnerships

and collaboration for school improvement: a review of the evidence' (October 2015). In this report they state:

> Research points to the positive influence of inter-school collaboration on teachers and teaching, with practitioners reporting an increased motivation to engage in professional dialogue with their colleagues, knowledge mobilisation and a general shift towards more learning-oriented and enquiry-based cultures in schools that have been collaborating (Stoll, 2015). There is also evidence of inter-school collaboration facilitating curriculum development and problem-solving (Ainscow et al., 2006)

Curriculum Kaizen – reflective questions

When reflecting on how effective and impactful our curriculum is, we can use the following questions to spark meaningful discussion and dialogue with colleagues and to refine the curriculum being delivered so it is constantly evolving and ultimately resulting in better outcomes for all pupils.

To what extent…

1. …does our curriculum offer pupils a broad knowledge base and the cultural capital necessary for them to thrive and achieve their aspirations?
2. …does our curriculum build on prior learning and knowledge and offer pupils the opportunity to make and explicitly discuss connections in their thinking and understanding?
3. …is our curriculum ambitious for all pupils and raising expectations around what we believe our pupils can achieve?
4. …is our curriculum accessible to all of our pupils despite barriers to learning they may be facing?
5. …is our curriculum engaging, interesting and promoting a love for learning?
6. …is our curriculum implemented in such a way that knowledge is retained over time?

7. …is our curriculum assessing pupils' understanding and using this information to inform teaching and learning?
8. …is our curriculum representative, multicultural, promoting diversity and respect and developing our pupils as individuals as well as scholars?
9. …does our curriculum give pupils experiences that supplement and strengthen their learning?
10. …is our curriculum giving pupils the arena to showcase their knowledge and understanding and celebrate their successes?

Practical strategies and top tips

Short-term

- Reflect on the curriculum and have open discussions and dialogue as a team on what's working and what needs to be a focus. Have a clear vision of this as a collective and keep this at the forefront of your mind when making decisions on the curriculum.
- Talk to the pupils: this can be an incredible eye-opener. Quite often how we think our curriculum will be experienced is quite different to how pupils do actually experience it.

Practical strategies and top tips
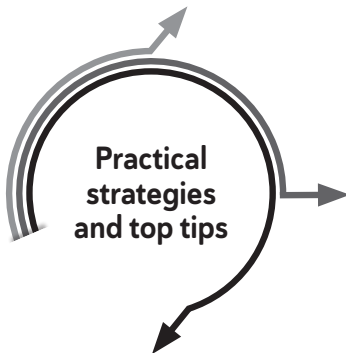
Medium-term

- Create 'quality circles' that meet regularly to review and discuss curriculum: to discuss the successes and strengths and celebrate these but also to unpick the challenges that may be hindering implementation. It can't all be done at once and it is a long game so have a structure like this that is continuous can support the process.

Long-term

- Have a long-term curriculum strategy: ambitious goals for the future and visions of how you want the curriculum to evolve and what you want it to look like. Have a think about some of the underlying structures that need to be in place to realise that vision and map out a flightpath to this end goal.

Expert Insight from Mary Myatt
Educational adviser, speaker and author

Kaizen has two parts: 'kai' means change and 'zen' means good. This Japanese idea is helpful for us as we think about curriculum design. It is now accepted that curriculum design is a journey, not a destination, a long-term iterative process, not a quick fix and the term 'kaizen' is a useful way of encapsulating that.

Underpinning kaizen in manufacturing is the expectation that any employee who encounters a problem or something not working as well as it should, stops and together with their line manager, works to find a solution. We all know that some of the units we teach don't feel quite right, so let's have some discussions with other colleagues about how they might be improved. It is relatively small, ongoing adjustments like these that contribute to big improvements over time.

'When you improve a little each day, eventually big things occur. When you improve conditioning a little each day, eventually you have a big improvement in conditioning. Not tomorrow, not the next day, but eventually a big gain is made. Don't look for the big, quick improvement. Seek the small improvement one day at a time. That's the only way it happens – and when it happens, it lasts.' – John Wooden

References

Department for Education (2015) 'Effective school partnerships and collaboration for school improvement: a review of the evidence'.

Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467855/DFE-RR466_-_School_improvement_effective_school_partnerships.pdf [Accessed March 2020]

Chapter eight

Effective characteristics for curriculum leadership

'If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader'
– John Quincy Adams

The curriculum is a defining feature of a school and so it goes without saying that effective leadership is essential in designing and implementing a curriculum successfully. Leadership is never something we study as part of our teacher training, nor something we often get explicit training on as we progress throughout our careers. In more recent times, it has delighted me to see the growing number of educational leadership programmes to support growing leaders but this wasn't always the case. In this chapter, I draw on a concept that originates in the early years – the characteristics of effective learning – only here we look at it through a different lens: the prerequisite leadership qualities that can strengthen the implementation of curriculum in school. The ideas that follow are by no means to be taken as gospel, but rather to be reflected upon and have emerged from the lessons I've learnt in leadership and from the leaders I've seen in action over the years. Let me quite candidly share that no one gets it entirely right but there's definitely something to be said for reflecting on our leadership style and competencies and considering how they impact the

culture within our schools. Through the act of leadership, we learn new lessons every day about how we operate, what's important to us as leaders, what our own individual strengths are and where we need to improve. If there's something that has become incredibly apparent to me in my years as a leader it's this: how we lead impacts those around us. Teachers, colleagues, pupils and ultimately their outcomes will all feel the effects of our leadership and so it's worth us taking the time to nurture ourselves and others as leaders and create safe space for leaders to think about how they are interacting with those around them in the pursuit of getting it right for the pupils.

Passion – creating a culture of striving for excellence

Passion for positive change in your school is intangible. As a leader, exuding this passion isn't just about talking the talk, but walking the walk. Motivational speaker and enthusiast Simon Sinek talks about the importance of 'finding your why' in his best-selling book *Start with Why*. He describes the 'golden circle' and at the centre of that circle is your 'why' – your purpose. Each of us will have our own 'why' as a leader but improving the life chances and outcomes for the pupils they serve seems to factor highly in that 'why' with most leaders I have spoken to. How do you share that passion? Do you speak to those you lead about that 'why'? It drives everything you do and provides a very authentic purpose for the hardships and challenges that the path to your vision may be paved with. It also brings people together. Having a collective and common purpose as a school and articulating it as a leader with your team can strengthen your collective resolve and serve you well when times get challenging, which is inevitable in any school journey. Striving for excellence, wherever you are in your school journey, can be incredibly powerful. Reaching for that goal and pushing the limits of what might be possible can cultivate a real culture of momentum and drive. This idea sits naturally with our natural inclination as a species for challenge. So, having that challenge ahead, sharing it clearly with others and regularly reminding them of that passionate 'why' is crucial, especially when the going gets tough.

Integrity – the power of authentic leadership

Integrity is a value that is at the very heart of authentic leadership. Being able to follow through on your word and sustain positive relationships with those you lead means that, even when you do trip up (which we all do), people will continue to buy in to your vision and continue to join you on the journey. Curriculum is a facet of school life that is close to teachers' hearts. It's the very make-up of their every day and it's important for us as leaders to recognise and respect that. We need to ensure the curriculum isn't a centrally held top-down entity but rather that teachers are involved and embrace curriculum as their own. Central to this is being authentic and clear about the bigger picture restrictions and challenges so that teachers are aware of how the curriculum sits within the wider context of the school and having that open dialogue with colleagues. Having integrity becomes so much easier when you keep the 'why', as mentioned previously, at the heart of all you do.

Leadership is all about relationships and recognising that it is people and not robots we are dealing with. Employing empathy, compassion and integrity when we lead are the foundations for positive change but also for happy schools.

Transparency – taking collective ownership

In this spirit of ensuring colleagues embrace and take ownership of the curriculum, we consider transparency. Being transparent about what the quality of the curriculum is, where its strengths are and what its limitations are, is key. This isn't always easy and sometimes involves quite candid conversations, but we shouldn't shy away from this. By maintaining a level of transparency around this, we can ensure our school communities take collective ownership of the curriculum and it becomes a joint endeavour rather than something held with a few. Of course, as a leader, there is a time and place for this and we may need, in certain situations, to consider how we message and communicate

things. But in my experience, transparency very much ties in with our previously mentioned 'integrity'. When we are transparent with our teams (the good, the bad and the ugly) we create a culture of trust, non-judgment and real-ness! We model a culture of continual improvement and continually developing ourselves and we make the curriculum EVERYONE'S responsibility, thus having a much larger pool of ideas, reflections and thinking to work with.

Empowerment – empowering others to lead

Good leadership is about empowering others. Every great leader I've ever worked with has cared less about their own personal progression and more about the 'greater good'. They've wanted to develop those around them to try and feed this 'greater good'. They have given others the opportunity to step up and grow because they know that by doing this, the TEAM gets stronger. As a curriculum lead, this is about empowering your subject leads to think with their 'leader hat' on. It's important for us to remember that teachers who have taken on these roles have previously had their 'teacher hat' on, thinking about their class, their class's progress and their class's outcomes. The move to thinking whole-school and thinking strategically about what needs to be done to improve outcomes in a particular subject area is a challenging one and needs to be coached so that subject leads feel supported. A great, practical way to do this is to have weekly KIT (keep-in-touch) meetings to unpick that strategic thinking and to allow them to switch into leader-mode. It's important to note that 'the teacher hat' and maintaining this as a leader is actually incredibly beneficial. By being closer to the ground, teacher subject leaders are able to more carefully consider what implementation will look like in the classroom and potential challenges teachers may face and solutions to these. Below is the Knoster (1991) model for managing complex change and an excellent tool to explore with subject leads when they're thinking about how best to introduce a new initiative.

Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	=	Success
Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Missing	=	False Starts
Vision	Skills	Incentives	Missing	Action Plan	=	Frustration
Vision	Skills	Missing	Resources	Action Plan	=	Resistance
Vision	Missing	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	=	Anxiety
Missing	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	=	Confusion

Adapted from Knoster, T. (1991) Presentation in TASH Conference, Washington, D.C. Adapted by Knoster from Enterprise Group, Ltd.

Discernment – It can't all be done at once!

You can't do it all. Let's be entirely honest about this one. It absolutely cannot all be done. Employing discernment for what needs to be prioritised is imperative. This is particularly important as a curriculum lead or coordinator, where you may have up to 14 subjects developing and working together to provide your overall curriculum offer. These subjects may be at different stages in terms of how they are being implemented and the subsequent impact. Let me repeat, it cannot all be done at once and by attempting to do it all at once, you end up taking a 'jack of all trades' approach which doesn't lead to sustainable and long-lasting change in the quality of education. Try to adopt a long-game approach to curriculum development and this isn't to say that you don't have a sense of urgency in terms of positive change. Creating a manageable and realistic curriculum action plan or timeline can be useful to support this process. If you co-ordinate the entirety of the curriculum this can be done subject-by subject to see if there is crossover between subjects (the two-birds-one-stone approach) and also to ensure that changes to subject guidance do not mean an avalanche of change for teachers (because no one likes that!).

Collaborative – many minds

This is potentially one of the most important characteristics for effective curriculum leadership: the ability to be collaborative and draw on the expertise of our colleagues. It's through collaborative and candid conversations that the best curriculum development takes place. Each colleague brings to the conversation their own experience, ideas, experiences and expertise and one of the most wonderful things about curriculum development is the meshing of these ideas to create a curriculum that fits perfectly with an individual school. This is also true of collaboration outside of your school and outside of your school's locality. So much learning can occur from hearing of other schools' journeys and from the lessons that they have learnt along their way and this is one of the most powerful tools we have in disseminating excellent practice and making quicker gains in terms of the quality of our school's education.

Reflective – seeing the wood from the trees

Having the space and time to reflect on leadership, both of our subject leads and our own, can have a huge impact on both the culture within a school and ultimately on pupil outcomes. Below is a set of reflective questions that could be used to engage in reflective dialogue with leaders (and to reflect on for ourselves!).

Leadership reflective conversations

1. What leadership initiative/project/outcome are you most proud of from the 2019-20 academic year?
2. What would you say are your strengths as a leader?
3. What would you say is your main area for development as a leader?
4. What element of leadership do you find most challenging? What element of leadership do you find most enjoyable?
5. Can you share a time when you had a measurable impact and explain why that was? What were the 'ingredients' for that success story and key takeaways?

6. Can you share a time in leadership when something went wrong and what did you learn from it? What would you do differently next time? What leadership lesson did you learn?

7. What knowledge do you think you need to develop further and how will you go about developing this in the coming year? What professional development could support you in this?

8. Give me an example of how you have empowered colleagues over the last year? How did it feel to empower others? How will you empower colleagues further?

9. What would you say is a strength of how you provide feedback?

10. What would you say is an area of development in how you provide feedback?

Expert Insight from Sarah Collymore NLE
Headteacher, St. George's CE Primary School

'If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.' Romans 12:7-9

As the leader of a church school, these words are ones that I follow religiously. However, I feel they are also pertinent to any leader, in any school, anywhere. Serving, encouraging, teaching, giving, leading responsibly and showing kindness are all key aspects of what makes an authentic, effective, compassionate leader. A leader who takes others on the journey with them; a significant skill needed for successful curriculum leadership.

To lead on curriculum is a huge responsibility and one we must take very seriously. We are responsible for pupils' learning and it is important that we have really considered what we want them to know and, more importantly, why we want them to know it.

Representation is vital in the curriculum. It is important that we think about who we need around the table when we are starting to create our vision for what we want our children to learn. This may not be who we *think* we need but I would encourage you to invite 'challenge'. Make sure there are colleagues around the table who will really challenge you and your team to think, discuss and negotiate what you want in your curriculum and why you want it. Is it right for your context; your pupils; your school?

If we engage in this process authentically and transparently and get as many people involved as possible, we will find we create an effective, authentic, representative curriculum. A curriculum that is engaging, owned by all, enjoyable and memorable. A curriculum we can all be proud of.

References

Sinek, S (2011) *Start with Why:How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* Penguin; 01 Edition (6 October 2011)

Chapter nine

Lessons learnt

I've learned that I still have a lot to learn'
– Maya Angelou

1. 'Rome wasn't built in a day'

Curriculum design, development and implementation is a long-game and getting it right takes time. Give yourself that time and space as a school and try to hold your own when it comes to reserving that space and time to do so. It takes time to get it right and to find what has had impact, what works for your pupils and teachers and the school community. Being patient with yourself and that process is vital.

2. Something's got to give

Accept the fact that, when implementing change, 'something's got to give'. So, whenever you're asking your team to do something else, think about what you're going to take away to level the playing field. What task can you streamline to ensure teachers have the time, energy and space to implement a new history initiative, for example? This also applies to you as a curriculum lead.

3. It won't always pan out how you want

Accepting this means that you will be less risk-averse, more open to new ideas and innovations and far more comfortable in your decision making as a curriculum lead. Learning comes from making mistakes. Knowing this, accepting this and living this has helped me have the confidence as a leader to take a chance on new projects and initiatives and welcome getting it majorly wrong.

4. Constructive criticism is your friend

Embracing constructive criticism is a sure-fire way for making accelerated progress within curriculum development. Openly welcoming this and drawing on the expertise of our colleagues can mean we avoid pitfalls and can mitigate against potential challenges ahead of time. We are all human and sometimes constructive criticism can feel quite personal, but we must reassure ourselves that it's not – it makes us and the quality of education within our schools better!

5. Always learning

We need to have a mindset of continual improvement and learning. We are fortunate to be part of an educational landscape which makes professional learning so accessible. By exposing ourselves to the breadth of knowledge out there we develop a greater 'toolkit' to draw upon when navigating our own individual curriculum journeys.

6. Cool, calm, serenity

This lesson comes from a dear colleague of mine, Rosie, who at any moment of panic or frustration, quite regularly reminds us, 'cool, calm, serenity, at all times.' This is an important one. As mentioned previously, things won't always work out and that's okay. It's easier said than done but it's important to stay measured and calm in the face of the challenges that leadership brings us.

Chapter ten

Closing reflections

I write these closing reflections at one of the most unusual times ever in education. A time which none of us saw coming and no one anticipated. A time when the sheer ingenuity, resilience and creativity of educators globally has truly reminded us all of just how unique and exceptional our professional community is. The coronavirus pandemic has forced us as a profession to re-model, re-evaluate and re-design what 'curriculum' and 'learning' looks like. What has particularly overwhelmed me is the optimism and dedication of educators. In the face of adversity and challenge, they have stepped up, held their own and even used this as an opportunity to learn: about the benefits of home learning; about the importance of parental engagement; and about the role of motivation in learning. As a profession we are now faced with the challenge of re-integration and addressing some of the gaps of learning that may have occurred due to the lockdown. A quote from Leonardo Da Vinci comes to mind in light of this:

'Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication'

Now, more than ever, we need to distil our curriculum and focus on high-quality teaching and learning and pedagogy. By shifting focus purely to this, we can make sure that with pupils back in the classroom,

we are making the most of every minute and every learning opportunity. Hopefully, we do this with a renewed sense of pride in the role we play as educators, the purpose of our work and the difference we make in the lives of our pupils. Ironically, the name of this book has taken on a very different meaning throughout the course of my writing. Having crossed this bridge with my fellow educators and seen just how effective teaching can be in all its forms, 'Curriculum to Pupils' seems far more apt.