

NERROLS CURRICULUM DESIGN: KEY PRINCIPLES

These principles set out our 'thinking out loud' when it comes to deciding what we believe an effective curriculum should look like. These seven statements are therefore concepts and ideas that we feel strongly about and have found ourselves regularly discussing, rather than actions.

Like everything we do at Nerrols Primary School and Nursery, we constantly review, refine and develop our thinking to ensure we are continuing to provide the very best educational experiences for all of our children. In this way, our curriculum is organic, ever-changing and evolving as a result of our disruptive thinking and continued strive for excellence.

Coherent Mapping

We want our children to form a deep understanding within and across subjects, woven together through knowledge and experiences. We aim to ensure that our children have a secure foundation at every stage of their learning to make new learning and the acquisition of new knowledge possible. By building these blocks of knowledge we aim to make sure that our children reach our clear end goals, using checkpoints along the way to make sure.

We make sure that learning is clearly mapped out, that it links to prior knowledge, builds towards future learning and challenges all children.

Broad and balanced

We never intentionally narrow our curriculum or the learning opportunities for any of our children, instead aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

Broad in the sense that our curriculum offers all children a wide range of subjects for as long as possible, and balanced so that not only are all subjects taught to all children but are also afforded sufficient space in the timetable to deliver their unique and distinct contribution, enabling our children to try new things and to find and develop their passions and talents.

Experiential

We know that some knowledge cannot be taught; it has to be experienced. This includes reading aloud, physical skills, handling artefacts in a museum or watching a play in a theatre. We carefully plan these experiences into our curriculum in order to make sure our children have a secure understanding of their learning and are careful not to make any assumptions about the experiences our children may have already had.

We consider where hands-on experiences are pre-requisites for learning, as well as where conceptual understanding is a pre-requisite for a hands-on experience, such as understanding the key narrative of a historical event before a site or museum visit.

A knowledge-rich curriculum

We believe that an effective curriculum should be deliberate about exactly what our children will learn in order to support the building of rich and extensive schema. We believe that knowledge is power and knowledge is empowering: it can unlock doors, provide a foundation for achieving success, allow our children to reach a deeper understanding and be creative.

We believe that knowledge builds on knowledge: the more our children know, the more they can learn.

High expectations

We believe that high expectations of learning are vital. If we don't expect children to reach a certain standard, they probably won't. We need to make sure we explore opportunities to take a more challenging path and remove any low level tasks that don't push children forwards with enough intensity or simply fill time.

We insist that children produce a high level of accuracy and precision in their work (by using the correct terminology, expressing ideas in a more focused manner, drawing graphs/diagrams with more precision), achieve deeper levels of learning through focus and volume of work and this means not accepting anything sub-standard.

Sequencing and small steps

Barak Rosenshine argued that learning should be presented in small steps and here at Nerrols we believe that in order to form secure schema, children need to assimilate new learning with what they already know. We know that this can be constrained by poor prior knowledge and our working memory (we can't deal with too much at once). Therefore, we make sure that learning is broken down into small steps and check that children have the pre-requisite knowledge they need in order to engage in new learning.

Lessons are designed to clearly introduce children to new concepts through explaining and modelling these small steps with lots of opportunities for practice.

Reading

We aim to find opportunities for children to learn about the areas covered by reading about them and think that planning for reading whilst improving knowledge of the subject being studied can be mutually reinforcing.

To do this, we teach our children the vocabulary they need to know explicitly and support learning through tight lists of key vocabulary, phrases and sentence stems and the opportunities to encounter them in context.

Our aim is for all children to be able to read relevant texts independently as part of their learning journey.