



Fleet Primary School

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Governor Visit Report

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| Area of focus for visit: | Curriculum | Link Governors: | Ellie Melkuhn and Hannah Shipp |
| Date of meeting: | 29th March 2021 | Link Staff Member and role: | Oona Matheson – Curriculum Lead and Senior Leader |

Visit Aim: To have a deeper understanding of how the school ensures a clear progression of skills and knowledge throughout the wider curriculum.

To find out how the school is responding to the challenges faced by COVID in reference to the curriculum.

Context:

At Fleet the curriculum is planned and delivered through cross-curricular topic work. The school aims for their curriculum to be creative and stimulating at all times and for it to ensure that the children really engage with and enjoy their learning in order to achieve high standards of academic attainment.

The children bring considerable and varied backgrounds of knowledge and experience to school and this is often not differentiated, at least in the child's mind, into subject areas. An integrated curriculum provides a means of building on such experience and provides a vehicle to introduce children to important areas contained within subjects in a contextualised and integrated way.

They want learning to be based on real experience and to recognise the importance of children's independence and autonomy. Providing such experiences underpins the school's approach to curriculum planning.

The link governors met with the curriculum lead, Oona Matheson, to look at the approach to learning and how children are doing; especially discussing the implications caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. We discussed the different aspects of the curriculum from Early Years, through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and the wider opportunities being taken through visitor experiences/trips, music, arts and drama as well as links with outside of school. The meeting took place virtually in line with current restrictions and covered a vast area as set out in the report below.

Meeting Report:

1. Planning and Assessment Cycle

- Teachers are allocated time at the end of each term for planning the next topic using brainstorming for each subject/objective with the rest of the teaching staff as part of a collaborative approach. This enables progression to be provided throughout the years (especially with skills), adapted for the appropriate age group (this was demonstrated showing how geography is taught throughout the different years by Ooona).
- Objectives are used to create a curriculum map. This indicates how the objectives are met in manageable and logical steps. It also shows how the different subjects are linked. Each term's topic is usually more heavily weighted towards a subject area eg. Science, history or geography, to enable focus, but this is spread between topics throughout the year to ensure all objectives are covered.
- Smartbook notes/ PPT slides are used to make weekly plans for learning in each subject area. These plans can be edited, revisited, and adapted as they are taught throughout the week to be specific to the needs of individuals within the class.
- Plans can be adjusted based on what experiences, prior knowledge and interests the students bring to the class. A great example was given of increased use of coding when looking at WW2 as the Year 6 class were particularly enthusiastic about this subject area.

2. Progression of skills and knowledge (how is this documented and monitored)

- Assessment – looking in student books (this has been challenging during COVID as trying to limit handling of books). Therefore, it may seem like there is less feedback this year – however this has been supplemented with increased verbal feedback in class.
- Formal assessments - *such as following lockdown. Range of resources utilised including PIRA tests for reading, White Rose for maths (Year 6 used previous SATS papers). PUMA tests are accessible if teachers feel it is needed for maths, but White Rose is more correlated with Camden Journey Planner. A cycle of this has just been completed.
- At end of each half term (at a minimum required by the SLT) – return to curriculum plan and highlight what has been covered and highlight any missing elements. Ways that these elements will be made up should be documented. It should be noted there are more gaps than would be ideal following COVID.
- Pupil progress meetings – the assessments are discussed with SLT to identify children that may need additional support. This could be in small groups or with teaching assistants. Tammy Wood does intervention groups, and Ruth Hanfling, the Literacy Lead, has time allocated to help with this. Small groups tend to result in good outcomes and improvement

in confidence. Interventions were purposefully halted between lockdowns in order for school to assess what and who was in need. These groups are now back up and running with some additional groups.

- Knowledge Harvest – the class teacher collects everything the children already know about a subject and record it. This is age appropriate. This is done for all major topics. At the end of the half term the students add all the new elements they have learned over the course of the half-term and highlight them in a different colour to show what has been learnt.
- Topic snapshots – this came about because the teachers realised that there was discrepancy in students in their baseline knowledge of certain topics based on the children’s experiences at home. Snapshots have key information about the topic that is released at the start of the term to encourage families to discuss the topic at home and prepare the students for what they will be learning. Over the course of the year these should be re-referred to in order to assess how the students are retaining the information.
- Subject audit – some questions around the terminology. Work scrutinies (half termly) and planning (throughout the year) and resources. All of this is looked at to ensure that the subjects are covered appropriately.
- Writing groups on Zoom (within class time) have also been found to be a useful intervention.
- Communication of progress with parents – used to have an open-door policy, but this is now challenging due to restrictions in place. During lockdown, Seesaw enabled parents to see the work their children were doing. Although, there was a large variation in work presented on Seesaw dependent on how much parents could support learning at home. There were increased examples of work in the newsletter to showcase the children’s work. Regular parent-teacher meetings have continued throughout the Pandemic but have been carried out virtually (phone calls and Zoom).

*Ellie highlighted that there is a lot of assessments and progression evaluation being done, that parents are never aware of. We discussed how this could be shared with parents. Oona will take this to the SLT. *Oona has since reported back that this will be something to consider how to share with parents and carers from September.*

3. Year Group Specific Action

- *Early Years:* Beth Cleine is the EYFS leader. Meets with nursery team every week to appraise what went well and needs adjusting. This has been vital since lockdown. Planning is done as a whole school to ensure that there is a continuous theme throughout the school and lack of repetition.
- *KS1:* The approach to teaching is more similar between the KS1 and KS2. Although, KS1 has more emphasis on phonics. However, it is really important that whilst considering Phonics, these children have rich literature resources with vibrant visuals.

- **KS2:** Whilst the SATS are important, Fleet tries to have a different approach; with a balanced curriculum and not just 'teaching to test'. It is important to build confidence and stamina, but it is key to give a wider variety of skills. Whilst there has been less obvious pressure due to no SATs, the school still needs to make sure that the Year 6 children are 'secondary ready'.
- Oona and Don have been on 'Decolonialising the curriculum' training – looking at how to renew the curriculum and ensure that diversity is embedded into every aspect of school life so that it is for real value rather than lip-service. This includes exploring books in the classroom to ensure that different backgrounds and diverse natures are demonstrated in the literature that the children have easy access to.

Hannah asked if any specific texts have been removed? None have been removed, however there have been conversations about balance of texts used and how representative they are. Noted that animals are more represented than some ethnicities!

4. STEAM

- Always an element of STEAM in all work due to interwoven nature of the curriculum. There is a STEAM HUB (Oona and Rachel are part of this) which has been very different this year. Collaborative working with local employers to develop projects that can be introduced to schools – this will have a large bank of appropriate projects for all age groups.
- STEAM week – the teachers are currently choosing the theme, likely to be a BIG question that is relevant to the children. At the moment, the team are thinking about shelters and what this means to the students/around the world/in the future. This project will be done in the Summer term (for all year groups) as it will be better delivered in the school setting.
- STEAM approach to be used for a half term. This has not been done yet this year. Some teachers may do it this year, but it may be dependent on teachers' confidence. It does take time for teachers to use peer support to enable these activities. However, this may not be done this year as it is important to focus on the students' specific needs rather than crow-bar in what we feel should be done.
- Technology has been used extensively this year, however, DT has suffered slightly.
- What is a STEAM approach – emphasises the subjects that can get pushed to one side. At times this is due to them being harder to resource. Engineering has a specific problem with this. The aim of STEAM is to elevate these subjects to the prominence of more mainstream projects e.g. using science to identify human anatomy but learning about these in artistic form e.g. creating anatomical-inspired art.

5. How the Wider Curriculum (not just English / STEM) is Highlighted in the School's Work

- Performing Arts is a big emphasis for the school. The school holds weekly class assemblies; allowing each class to showcase their topic in a creative way. There are singing assemblies,

and two end of term productions for EYFS/KS1 and KS2. The Year 6 production is a particular highlight. Singing and role play is key within all year groups (currently restricted in how the children interact with each other due to COVID). In the summer term the school hopes to pick this up, with the aim of still doing school productions – potentially with staging outside in the playground.

- Music – due to bubbles this has been challenging (music specialist is also a Year 4 teacher). Some music classes have been postponed until later in the year. Online programmes have been utilised where possible (composing software or home music playing).
- Philosophy – The Philosophy expert from an outside agency, who was delivering this has run some training sessions for staff so that they can deliver the philosophy sessions themselves. The children really enjoy these discussions. COVID does restrict these discussions (i.e. unable to all sit round in a circle on the floor), however this is still being trialled around tables.
- PHSE – stronger than it has ever been. Increased resources for wellbeing. Guided mediation and yoga are being utilised by teachers. Incorporating these discussions in the day, facilitated by doing shorter sessions between more academic subjects.

6. Pros/Cons of Project and Topic Work for Students

- Pros – all children can engage because it is an open way of giving information. Something that every child can shine in, so those that are amazing at other skills can take the fore front. Naturally lends itself to high quality work as there is increased dedicated time. This feeds into the English too as the topic work encourages contextual English. It enables outside agencies to come in and share their knowledge and skills.
- Cons – it can be challenging to not do too much! Teachers have a wide range of ideas, but the teachers need to ensure that it is achievable within time frames. Scheme-type approach; the teachers need to not just focus on the end results, and it is important to emphasis the value in the journey.
- Home learning projects – try to keep it open (though related to their topic) as they know that parents like to work with their children and engage with the educational process. Some parents feel pressure of producing high standard of work. The teachers ensure that all of the work is celebrated. This used to be through a display in the hall, however, now it is done through class presentation. Children are very open about what adult support has been provided. Learning is completed regardless of the level of adult support. It is important that the children are given agency over the direction of their work. Some of the children felt that if the work wasn't brought in that it was less worthy, however some of the work that was sent in was more varied and on different platforms due to the challenges of COVID. It is recognised that not all families have the same resources, but this is checked with the children before they start and additional supplies are sent home, or children are given access to class resources during break times if needed.

7. Homework

- Try to keep a set pattern to enable planning for parents. In comparison to other schools we set slightly less, but there are always different desires from parents (some want more, others less). There is a focus on spellings (both tested and in contextual work). Mathematics is something the children are familiar with and use well. Seesaw is being used to set learning, the children are familiar with the platform, and enables parents to also review work. Use of seesaw minimises handing over of physical resources (COVID beneficial)

8. Website

- Several conversations amongst the SLT – Becca is taking this challenge forward currently. It has been discussed with teaching staff about optimal organisation and try to simplify it.

9. Trips

- Due to COVID topic-based trips have not been so easy. Residential trips have been cancelled, this has had a large impact on the school. Investigating other options that could be done in a safe way – day trips via coach, sleepover in school if allowed, a festival, pizza party. At Gower, there is a real focus on coastal life, environment and also imagination. Teaching staff have been trying to bring the 'outside, in'. Different visitors from the CLC and October gallery, Francis Crick, Zoom religious workshops with clerics. All of this has tried to keep the students connected with the wider community.

Written By: Ellie Melkuhn (reviewed by Hannah Shipp)

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