

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS: A SUMMARY OF THE CHANGES FROM SEPTEMBER 2015

The National Context:

As of September 2014, a revised National Curriculum for England and Wales came into being. The schools of the Three Rivers Learning Trust have worked closely together to plan, write and deliver a new curriculum for our students. In 2014/15, the new curriculum was implemented with Years 5 and 7, in 2015/16 the new curriculum is being implemented with Years 6 and 8 and from 2016/17 the new curriculum will be implemented in Year 9.

From September 2014, the use of National Curriculum levels was also withdrawn and schools were given the autonomy and responsibility to develop and devise an assessment and reporting system which best met the needs of their own cohort of students. Like many schools nationally, we continued to report using National Curriculum levels in 2014/15 while developing and trialling our own internal system during this time. This process is now complete. Consequently from September 2015, we are using a bespoke assessment and reporting system in upper KS2 and KS3 across all schools of the Learning Trust, including Dr Thomlinson's Middle School, Rothbury. In addition to this, we have liaised closely with all feeder first schools, such that the systems that are being implemented in KS1 and lower KS2 feed logically in.

There are a number of points which are important to reiterate with regard to these changes:

- The curriculum changes are national changes which are being implemented by all schools accordingly;
- The content of the new National Curriculum is considerable more challenging e.g. with elements of content that had previously been delivered in Year 7 being moved into the year 6 curriculum; this has been the case throughout the curriculum;
- Elements of the maths and English curriculums have become considerably more prescriptive, with clear directives being given on calculation methodologies and grammar delivery, for example;
- The curriculum guidance for the foundation subjects has become broader and less specific, with more flexibility for individual interpretation;
- The reporting of a child's progress using National Curriculum levels has been removed completely, with schools being required to develop their own systems.

Whilst these changes have been universal and considerable, they have also given schools the opportunity to completely review curriculum, assessment and reporting arrangements and to develop bespoke systems which are absolutely tailored to the needs of the cohort of individual schools. As such, this opportunity has allowed for considerable innovation and creativity in designing a curriculum that we believe is right for our students.

Considerable research has gone into the design of the new curriculum. We have drawn on expert educational advice and practice to ensure that the curriculum we have developed has the breadth and depth required to enable students to make the best progress that they can, whilst being fully engaged with the learning opportunities provided.

The Curriculum:

The newly devised curriculum is now in place and being delivered to all of years 5, 6, 7 and 8, with year 9 following a new curriculum at the High School as of September 2016.

The new curriculum has focussed on supporting the further development of:

- Literacy skills
- Numeracy skills
- Social, moral, spiritual, emotional and personal skills
- Cultural awareness
- Independent thinking
- Creativity

An underpinning principle of the new curriculum has been the recognition that depth of understanding is as crucial as breadth in supporting a child's learning. It is vital that the foundations are there in order for subsequent learning to be made sense of.

A summary overview of the content of the new curriculum can be found on our website under 'students' and 'curriculum'. The assessment frameworks for each subject (detailing the key learning objectives) will be available on the website immediately after October Half Term.

In devising the new curriculum for each subject, a complete set of curriculum objectives, against which each child's progress will be assessed, have been devised. A common approach to this process has been used across all subjects, with age expected (referred to as learning thresholds) objectives being written for different learning strands within each subject. These objectives now form the basis of our internal assessment system.

In each year group students will follow the following curriculum:

| KS2 | Curriculum Allocation |
|---|-----------------------|
| English | 5 lessons / week |
| Maths | 5 lessons / week |
| Science | 3 lessons / week |
| PE | 2 lessons / week |
| Geography | 1 lesson / week * |
| History | 1 lesson / week * |
| RE | 1 lesson / week ** |
| MFL - French | 1 lesson / week |
| Art | 1 lesson / week *** |
| Music | 1 lesson / week |
| Computing | 1 lesson / week |
| Technology (Food, Textiles and Resistant Materials) | 1 lesson / week *** |
| Deep Learning Experience (PSHE and Citizenship strands) | 2 lessons / week |
| * Delivered through 'themes' ** Taught interspersed through year *** Taught in carousel | |

| KS3 | Curriculum Allocation |
|---|-----------------------|
| English | 4 lessons / week |
| Maths | 4 lessons / week |
| Science | 3 lessons / week |
| PE | 2 lessons / week |
| Geography | 1 lesson / week |
| History | 1 lesson / week |
| RE | 1 lesson / week |
| MFL – French and Spanish or German | 2 lessons / week * |
| Art | 1 lesson / week |
| Music | 1 lesson / week |
| Computing | 1 lesson / week |
| Technology (Food, Textiles and Resistant Materials) | 2 lessons / week ** |
| Deep Learning Experience (PSHE and Citizenship strands) | 2 lessons / week |
| *1 lesson of each language **Taught in carousel | |

Assessment Framework:

Each subject area now has a personalised assessment framework, detailing the key learning objectives for that subject. A sample extract of the Geography assessment framework is given below:

| | | ASSESSMENT FOCUS (LEARNING STRAND) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|----------|----------|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| <i>I can.....</i> | | AF1: PLACES | | | AF2: CONCEPTS, PATTERNS AND PROCESSES | | | AF3: SKILLS AND ENQUIRY | | | AF4: VALUES AND ATTITUDES | | |
| L E A R N I N G T H R E S H O L D | ADVANCED | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and produce maps in context to support understanding of place. Explain increasingly complex interactions that make places unique, including analysis of change over time. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain complex concepts & processes and their interactions, including variation in how these processes work. Analyse and evaluate geographical patterns. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise and undertake complex investigation sequences. Accurately select and use a range of complex geographical skills and techniques and be able to evaluate their effectiveness. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain complex & opposing views and opinions and how these influence our world. Analyse and evaluate a range of supporting and opposing arguments. | | |
| | Depth | D | E | M | | | | | | | | | |
| | HIGHER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce detailed maps at a range of scales and for different purposes. Explain human and physical features of places, making links and connections and recognising change over time. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain a range of concepts & processes, the interactions that exist between them and how they shape environments. Explain and analyse a range of geographical patterns. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise and answer logical investigation sequences to research a topic or issue. Accurately select and use a wide range of geographical skills and techniques to present ideas and comment on their effectiveness. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain a wide range of views and opinions on geographical issues and how these may evolve over time. Analyse and explain supporting and opposing arguments. | | |
| | Depth | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | INTERMEDIATE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate places accurately on a range of maps at different scales. Describe and explain human and physical features of places and recognise change over time. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe and explain concepts & processes and recognise how they shape different environments. Describe and explain a range of different geographical patterns. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask, answer and devise logical questions to investigate a topic / issue. Accurately select and use a range of geographical skills (cartographic, graphical and ICT) to present ideas. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe and explain different views and opinions on geographical issues. Describe and explain arguments for and against issues, including conflict. | | |
| | Depth | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ELEMENTARY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name and locate places on simple small and large scale maps. Identify and describe human and physical features of places, recognising differences. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and describe simple concepts & processes. Identify and describe simple geographical patterns. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask and answer questions in a logical sequence. Use simple geographical skills (cartographic and graph) to present ideas. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and describe simple views and opinions (including own) on geographical issues. Identify and describe whether opinions are for or against an issue. | | |
| | Depth | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Each Curriculum Area has then organised the delivery of the key learning objectives through planned units of work which allow students to develop a depth of understanding in relation to these.

Learning Threshold: This refers to the **age expected learning objectives for a child by the end of that academic year**. E.g. typically we would expect a child in year 8 to be working at the 'higher' learning threshold. However, in some subjects or in some strands of a subject, it is possible that a child might be working at the threshold above or below this.

Assessment Focus (Learning Strand): This refers to the different elements of learning that thread through the entire curriculum for that subject. The number of strands will vary for each subject, but will be between 3 and 8 strands of learning.

Depth of Learning: For any assessment focus (learning strand) within any given learning threshold, children will be demonstrating different depths of understanding. The assessment framework allows for this. As a child progresses through the curriculum, they will be assessed (in a range of formats) as to the depth of understanding that they are demonstrating. The varying depths of understanding will be identified as follows:

Developing: 

Expected: 

Mastering: 

The assessment framework allows the different strengths and areas for development to be more easily identified for each child.

Assessment Methodology:

Assessment of each child's progress against the curriculum objectives set out in the assessment framework will take place in a variety of ways, including:

Baseline Assessment: These assessments will take place at different points e.g. at the start of a year or at the start of a topic. These assessments will support staff in being able to accurately know what a child can currently do, based on prior learning, and where the gaps might exist that need to be further developed.

Teacher assessment: Through observation of what a child can and can't do each lesson, supported by classwork, homework and discussion. This allows for the teacher's ongoing professional assessment of each child's learning.

Focussed assessment tasks: Curriculum areas have developed a programme of short 'Focussed Assessment Tasks' linked directly to the assessment framework (learning objectives) for that curriculum area. These assessments typically take the form of short tasks that are embedded within the curriculum planning for each subject. They form part of the learning process and in many cases will assess just 1 learning strand for that subject e.g. for KS3 geography there will be 4 Focussed Assessment Tasks in each of the 3 units of work which will focus on assessing 1 learning strand each.

Summative Assessments: In most cases these will take the form of end of topic / unit 'tests' which will demonstrate what students have learnt across a longer period of time. These tests will also help to develop the skills of revision and independence required in preparation for external assessments at the end of KS2 and in KS4.

Students will be given regular feedback from any assessments completed, as well as on their classwork and homework.

Reporting to Parents / Carers:

As we have done previously, we will continue to formally report to parents / carers three times each year. These reporting points will be in November, March and June; 2 weeks after each of the half term breaks. After each report has been issued, there will be the opportunity to attend a parents evening to discuss the report and any aspect of your child's progress further.

We have developed the reporting process to allow you, as parents / carers, to have a greater understanding of the different elements of each subject that your child can do well, or would benefit from being supported to develop further. Each subject will report on each learning strand by the end of the year, in line with the curriculum plan for that subject. For example, science may report on the biology strand in November, but not have completed sufficient content or have sufficient evidence of a child's progress to report on the working scientifically, physics or chemistry strands until later in the year. The report is therefore designed to give a cumulative picture of a child's progression through the curriculum across the year.

Format of the report: The report will provide a summary of the progress being made in each subject in each strand of learning at the reporting points identified above. An extract example for reading is given below:

| | Foundation | Breakthrough | Elementary | Intermediate | Higher | Advanced | Attitude to Learning | Attitude to Homework | In order for Joe to make further progress in each subject he needs to be able to take the next steps indicated below: |
|-------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| Reading | → | | | | | | | | |
| Knowledge and Context | | █ | | | | | 1 | 2 | Understand some of the technical and other terms needed for discussing what is heard and read such as metaphor, simile, analogy, imagery, style and effect. |
| Interpretation | | █ | | | | | | | |
| Analysis and Comparison | | █ | | | | | | | |

The example above shows that, for this child, they are demonstrating the **expected** depth of understanding for the 'knowledge and context' strand for reading at the breakthrough threshold (the threshold typical for a child in Year 5). It also shows that the child is working at the **developing** level for the 'analysis and comparison' strand for reading, but that (at the point of this report being issued) there was not yet enough evidence for the child to be assessed against the interpretation strand. In subsequent reports, the grid would be added to, indicating further progress being made in each of these strands. As from September 2016, the cells in the foundation threshold will be filled in to indicate the progress information transferred from the First Schools using the new framework.

As learning is a cumulative process, we would fully expect a report to have more 'developing' (red) cells in the first report of the year. This does not represent a concern, purely the fact that there will have been less opportunity to securely demonstrate the depth of learning required to be deemed 'expected' or 'mastering' in that particular strand. Equally, there will be a higher proportion of blank (white) cells on the first report of the year, for content not yet covered.

We would typically expect a child to be working at the **expected** depth of learning within the learning threshold indicated for their age, **by the end of the academic year** that they are in. Variation will exist and end of year expectations will be altered on the basis of the progress a child is making through the year. For example, if a child has reached the **expected** depth of learning in all strands of a subject by March, they will be stretched to achieve the mastering level by the end of the year or even, if appropriate, to be moving on to elements of the next threshold up.

Attitudes to Learning and Attitudes to Homework: These are both important measures of a child’s approach to their own learning. In the student planners and on the walls around school, we constantly reinforce the characteristics required to be a successful learner. These characteristics form the basis of our assessment of a child’s attitude to learning and attitude to homework, as set out in the table below (and as made explicit in our behaviour and homework policies). This information will also be included on the back of the report for your reference.

Attitude to Learning and Homework

| Successful students: | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | Excellent | Good – Minimum Expectation | Improvement needed | Cause for concern |
| Attitude to Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive at lessons on time • Come to lessons properly equipped and prepared to learn • Get on with their learning (and allow others to do the same) • Give answers and speak to others appropriately • Respect others, their work (including presentation and quality) and their equipment • Listen to and follow instructions the first time | Almost without exception | Most of the time | Some of the time | Inconsistently and / or infrequently |
| Attitude to Homework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record homework in planners • Ask for help / support ahead of deadline (if needed) • Complete homework on time • Complete homework to the best of their ability | Almost without exception | Most of the time | Some of the time | Inconsistently and / or infrequently |

Our expectation is that all students are typically demonstrating an attitude to their own learning and homework which is at least good.

Next Steps / Target Comments: Each subject will also provide some focussed ‘next steps’ which will give some guidance as to what needs to be done to make further progress in that subject. These ‘next steps’ will be taken from the assessment framework for each subject and so will be the curriculum

objective(s) that a student needs to focus on next in order to develop their current depth of understanding further; these will be discussed with students in class and with yourselves at parents evenings to provide further explanation and exemplification.

Tutor / DLT Comments: We wholeheartedly believe that a child's time in school is about much more than just their academic progress. Consequently, in the final report of each year, tutors and the Directors of Learning and Teaching for a given year group will write a report outlining the participation and contribution that has been made by each child throughout the year.

Attendance: The report will also include the cumulative attendance % for the child as of the Friday immediately prior to the report being distributed.

Personalised Learning Profile: The report issued for each child represents their own personal learning profile. Progress towards each curriculum objective will be tracked by teaching staff as part of an ongoing process throughout the school year, as and when that child has securely demonstrated the skills, aptitude and understanding required to be deemed 'developing', 'expected' or 'mastering' that particular curriculum objective. The report issued therefore represents the child's learning at that particular point in time.

Transfer to the new Assessment and Reporting framework:

Comparison of Learning Thresholds and historic National Curriculum Levels: It is not possible to make direct comparisons between the age expected learning thresholds and the historic National Curriculum levels. As already referenced earlier in this document there has been much change to the organisation of content in the new National Curriculum document. For example, content which may previously have been deemed '4b' (typical level for a child at the end of Y6) may now be taught within the 'breakthrough' learning threshold (end of Year 5 age expectation), whilst other content deemed to be '4b' may still be being taught within the 'elementary' learning threshold (end of Year 6 age expectation). To attempt to make any comparisons would therefore be both inappropriate and unhelpful.

The first report: Given the point made above, we will not be pre-populating each student's 'Learning Profile' retrospectively. This will mean that in year 1 of the new reporting system being used, there will not be a track record of learning for the previous academic year(s) using this system. As we move into year 2 of using this assessment system and beyond the report will retain the progress made by the end of the previous academic year such that a comprehensive picture of a child's progress over time can be seen. This will mean that when the first report is issued in November, there will be a considerable number of cells on the report which appear as 'white'. This will simply represent either a) no assessment data in this format for the previous year(s); b) insufficient coverage of a particular learning strand has taken place between September and November as it falls later on in the curriculum plan for that subject and / or c) there is insufficient evidence at that point to be able to say that a child has 'securely' demonstrated a particular depth of learning.

Prior Learning and Progress: All teaching and learning support staff will be using progress points reached at the end of the last academic year to know what the strengths and areas for development for each student are. This information will be used to ensure that as we move to universal delivery of the new curriculum, strengths are further built on and any gaps in knowledge and understanding are filled.

Transition to the High School: The assessment and reporting model outlined has been developed in conjunction with the high school. This is the system that subjects will be using to assess progress in Year 9, with the exception of maths and science as students will be starting GCSE courses in these subjects in Year 9. English is currently consulting on whether the GCSE course will also start in Year 9 as of September 2016.