



The flexibility to work for sustained periods of time

A Consistent Approach to Thematic Planning

Located in the small town of Goole, East Yorkshire, Hook Primary School is a one-form entry school of 192 pupils from a mixed socio-economic background. The journey to 21st century learning for the school began over ten years ago when head teacher Janet Huscroft set out to achieve a whole school approach to teaching and learning. "Teaching and learning at the school was good," says Janet, "but we wanted to do more to make learning real – and to make this consistent across the school."

A Process for Planning

The process has taken some years to evolve, but the school now has a well-developed method for planning. "Initially, teachers put together their own planning which they shared with colleagues at a curriculum meeting. The benefit of sharing ideas was soon recognised," explains Janet. And so, after some years of evolution, the school now hosts an annual whole school planning event, at which, teachers, teaching assistants and governors come together to discuss teaching themes for the coming academic year. The school's own schemes set out learning objectives for

each year group in all subjects of the National Curriculum. The teacher uses these as the starting point for developing medium-term plans i.e. three terms' worth of work on a particular theme each term. At the planning event, teachers begin by sharing their draft ideas with everyone. This enables all colleagues to contribute ideas, to make connections, and become fully familiar with what is going to be happening in each different year group. This initial part of the planning process ensures progression, continuity and coverage of all curriculum areas. The next stage of the planning is the presentation to



Real world contexts for learning

pupils. Says Janet, "It's when the teachers share their ideas with the pupils that the themes really come to life." At these sessions, pupils are encouraged to discuss and suggest ideas as to how the theme might progress. As a result, themes change year on year as teachers expertly match the needs and interests of a particular cohort of pupils.

One principle that has been in place since the inception of this planned cross-curricular approach to learning is that pupils, at all times, have access to the teacher's planning and are fully immersed in the self-assessment process. Pupils appraise their own (and others' work), set targets for future achievement, record their achievements on individual records, and readily discuss with adults how their learning took place, what they have

achieved and where their learning will take them in the future.

Putting Plans into Action

A striking and particularly successful part of the learning experience for pupils is the real-world context for learning. A visit out of school takes place at the beginning of every term. Pupils are actively engaged in the planning and coordination of the visit and, says Janet, "A lot of time and thought is given to make sure we get good buy-in from those we are visiting." One class recently visited a local farm. At one level, this could simply be a stimulus around which to base the rest of the term's work. Importantly though, the subsequent work has been carefully planned and has seen pupils engaged in a variety of planned and related activities such as role-play, tracking the production of bread, and baking their

own bread. The post-visit planning allows activities to flow more naturally from one to the other and enables pupils to transfer skills between subjects more easily. And, because pupils are encouraged to work from first-hand experiences at all times, "Children have a sense of real purpose in their work."

Beyond Planning

Because pupils are more closely involved in planning and self-assessment, there are more opportunities for individuals and groups to carry out investigations, solve problems, and form hypotheses. Often in conventional timetabling, the opportunities to pursue these higher-order skills are limited or cut short and so Hook School made the decision to scrap the timetable and allow the day to flow naturally. Learning in a particular subject area can be "blocked" but pupils and teachers have the flexibility to work for extended and sustained periods of time where this is required. As Janet comments, "No work or activity is ever left unfinished. Pupils develop the interest, concentration and perseverance to see an activity through from beginning to end. They can move independently from one task to another and are able to direct their own learning. This freedom has resulted in a rise in standards as well as the quality of work produced. As pupils develop the independence to work in this way they become increasingly confident in reflecting on, assessing and setting targets for future development."

Next Steps

In order to develop and extend even more personalised learning opportunities, the outdoor environment is in the process of being resourced to enrich all areas of the curriculum. Says Janet, "It's another step in enabling pupils to exercise a choice of where they will carry out investigations and enquiries."

For further information visit the Hook Primary School website at www.hookprimary.eriding.net