Department for Education

Teaching a broad and balanced curriculum for education recovery

June 2021

Contents

Summary

This non-statutory guidance is for teachers and leaders in reception and key stages 1, 2 and 3 who are responsible for the curriculum and its teaching. It offers suggestions to help schools decide how to prioritise elements within their curriculum for education recovery.

These suggestions are based on the good practice evident in many schools, as exemplified in the case studies. While the guidance states that schools should follow these suggestions, this language is used for clarity and the guidance remains optional.

Expiry or review date

This guidance will be reviewed before June 2022.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- School leaders and school staff in all maintained schools, academies and free schools

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Guiding Principles

You should continue to teach a broad and balanced curriculum in all subjects. This includes what pupils learn from wider experiences such as educational visits and visitors to the school.

Taking the planned, sequenced curriculum as a starting point, you should prioritise teaching missed content that will allow pupils to make sense of later work in the curriculum. This includes key knowledge, skills, vocabulary, concepts, and the links between concepts. For schools that are required to follow it, these are outlined in the national curriculum. You may need to modify your curriculum substantially and, if necessary, update the information you are required to publish on your website.

We encourage schools to take a subject-specific approach when prioritising what to teach.

Curriculum adjustments should be informed by:

- an understanding of the critical content for progression in each subject
- what pupils do and do not know.

Questioning and discussion will reveal pupils' gaps, misconceptions and insecure knowledge, so that effective support can be put in place.

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Assessment

The purposes of assessment should be clear:

- formative: identifying what pupils do and do not know, or can and cannot do, to inform feedback to them and any adjustments to teaching

- summative: measuring pupils' (and/or school) performance at the end of a course or programme of study

Focused assessments which target specific components of knowledge or skills precisely are likely to be more effective. For example, the marks pupils achieve on a past paper that covers a wide range of content will not allow you easily to infer what the precise knowledge gaps are. A low-stakes test or quiz, on the other hand, focused on the salient aspects of a specific topic, will very quickly tell you who has learnt it, and how well.

In some subjects (such as mathematics, languages and for phonics), gaps in knowledge are likely to present serious difficulties for pupils in mastering the next stage of what they need to know. Identifying these gaps and teaching the content pupils have missed are essential.

In other subjects (such as geography, history, citizenship or religious education), knowledge gaps in one topic may not be as critical for progression in another topic. In these subjects, remedying what has been missed is likely to be most effective by adjusting the curriculum later. Further guidance is provided below, by subject, to provide support in making these judgments.

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Extra support

In some subjects and phases, well-targeted interventions, based on a range of high-quality assessments, can complement decisions about curriculum prioritisation and teaching. For example, some pupils may be struggling with fluency in reading or the legibility of their handwriting, and so need targeted support.

While interventions might suggest an increased workload, time spent on them, making sure that pupils catch up, can be a good investment of effort. This is because it enables more effective whole-class work to take place later and ultimately eases workload.

It is important that any additional interventions are explicitly linked to the content of daily lessons and that systems for feedback are effective, so that pupils experience the curriculum as a coherent whole.

You are encouraged to consider how the Recovery Premium can be used to supplement high-quality teaching in your context.

The National Tutoring Programme provides additional, targeted tuition support for disadvantaged children and young people who have been hardest hit by disrupted education. In addition, leaders might consider the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit to identify further support.

Evidenced-based approaches for interventions

When considering evidence-based approaches for interventions, schools might consider:

- which is best suited to their purposes: classroom teachers might explore teacher-led, small-scale and evidence-based interventions.

- larger-scale, evidence-based programmes, for example, for pupils learning to read.

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Reception and key stage 1

Making sure pupils catch up with their reading is the priority, since it is vital for their access to the rest of the curriculum. Their progress will depend on high- quality teaching. A vital element of this is the successful teaching of phonics and this should continue to be a priority. Children coming back to school feel secure and confident when they recognise the safety of previously established routines.

Teachers should use the assessments in the school's phonic programme to:

- identify gaps in children's phonic knowledge and revise lessons that address these gaps
- identify children who might need immediate extra support and provide additional daily phonics practice for them with a well-trained adult.

Leaders should make sure that:

- the direct teaching of phonics continues to take place every day for all children from the start of the reception year, including teaching correct letter formation
- teaching time is used to maximise the number of words children read and spell, and that children practise knowledge from previous lessons until they can use it automatically
- children practise reading books that are decodable for them at that stage of their learning, every day, both at home and in school.

Teachers can help children to thrive by choosing books to read aloud to them that will engage them emotionally. By listening to and talking about stories, children also meet vocabulary that they might not be able to read for themselves. In this way, they add to the store of words they know and thus build a strong foundation for comprehension and their own writing. Daily story times should therefore be a priority. Teachers should also help children to learn and enjoy rhymes, poetry and songs.

The English Hubs provide further support to local maintained schools, academies and free schools to improve the teaching of phonics, early language and reading in Reception and Year 1.

Andrew Truby, Headteacher at St Wilfrid's Primary School, reflects on their work as an English hub

As an English hub, we always make the teaching of reading our priority. We support our partner schools, most of which are in disadvantaged areas, to do the same.

The routines of learning to read and write have been essential in settling children into the daily life of school.

During this difficult time, we've placed extra focus on supporting the slowest progress readers – whatever their age. Many receive daily one-to-one tutoring to practise what they have been taught in the morning lesson.

We send home letter-sound cards, matched decodable reading books, and links to virtual phonic lessons so the children can practise reading with their parents.

For children with parents who are not able support them or without devices at home, some schools organise a daily breakfast phonics club where teaching assistants listen to each child read their decodable reading book and select virtual lessons for them to watch.

Behind all this, the reading leaders hold practice sessions every week to support teachers and teaching assistants to get even better at teaching the neediest children to read.

We have also encouraged schools to make story and poetry times the highlight of every day: to read and re-read stories to children and make books available for them to borrow.

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Art & Design

Curriculum planning should identify and emphasise core knowledge at each phase. This includes, for example, ways of making art as well as its historical and cultural development. Schools should make strategic decisions about what practical knowledge is core to their curriculum.

At key stage 1:

- pupils' skills in manipulating tools and equipment to create work and use their imagination are essential for exploring materials and techniques later in the curriculum. It is therefore a priority to develop and embed fine and gross motor skills by teaching pupils how to use a range of tools competently. This may include cutting with scissors or using the correct grip for specific art tools.

At key stages 2 and 3:

- leaders should prioritise securing depth and mastery of pupils' practical knowledge, such as different artistic methods, techniques, media and materials. Securing this knowledge allows pupils to communicate, record and create.

- It remains important that pupils have significant time for deliberate practice, re-encountering the core knowledge in different contexts and with growing complexity to develop mastery (for example, drawing with pencil, ink and wire).

- The emphasis on practical knowledge should encompass multiple applications, for example, drawing representationally, drawing expressively and drawing unconventionally.

- Focusing pupils' attention on the multiple forms in which art exists will help to secure their knowledge of the subject's breadth and diversity. Teachers should revisit previous topics or teach the content of missed ones, placing more emphasis on developing mastery in the process of making rather than a performative final outcome.

Heather Denny, Vice Principal and Trust Specialist Art Advisor at Inspiration Trust describes how they have adapted their key stage 2 curriculum to facilitate educational recovery.

At Norwich Primary Academy, we have scrutinised our curriculum to identify and focus on the core elements that will provide pupils with the specific knowledge they need to progress in the next academic year. As we use a spiral curriculum in art, we provide pupils with greater depth in each unit year on year, refining and developing both their

subject knowledge and practical skills. For example, we wanted to ensure pupils had a secure grasp of the formal elements of art because knowledge of colour theory, tone, line and shape underpins all artistic study and practice. Without a clear understanding in these areas, pupils will struggle both to analyse and interpret the work of artists they study, and to manipulate different media to create particular effects in their own artwork. We used a series of low-stakes quizzes and responded to identified gaps in these areas by re-teaching the content and giving pupils plenty of opportunities to practise retrieving and applying that knowledge.

Another key curriculum element we wanted to ensure was secure was primary and secondary observational drawing skills using a variety of materials. We used formative assessment to identify weaknesses and then gave instruction in small steps to support pupils. Focusing on the theoretical and practical knowledge that is central to our curriculum has meant that elements that form the 'hinterland' knowledge have not been covered this year. Hinterland knowledge is background or peripheral knowledge that is less crucial to remember, but which exemplifies or provides a rich narrative around the core. For example, for observational drawing looking at Giorgio Morandi, useful hinterland knowledge would be to know about how artists trained and developed at this time, why they may have worked in the way they did, and how Rembrandt influenced Morandi's work. To compensate for this, we are adapting our curriculum for the next academic year, as we know that, without this wider context and cultural capital, our pupils will have a weaker understanding and enjoyment of art.

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Citizenship

To make good progress in citizenship, pupils should develop a secure knowledge of key concepts which are important to future learning.

At key stage 1 this is likely to include:

- a focus on securing key knowledge of a small number of ideas, including belonging, fairness, and simple rules and laws that help us live together in a community.

At key stage 2:

- the focus is on securing pupils' knowledge of a broader range of concepts, such as rights and responsibilities, democracy, and community, since these will be the most important for future study.

At key stage 3:

- prioritisation should focus on securing pupils' knowledge of key concepts, such as civil liberties, Parliament, and laws, and how this can be applied in a range of complex situations and cases, including those that are new or unfamiliar.

This will include checking pupils' misconceptions and making sure they can use key terms in citizenship, specifically and in appropriate contexts.

Filishia Senior reflects on how teachers at Harris Academy Bermondsey have adapted their key stage 3 citizenship curriculum.

One of the ways that we have maintained a sense of community, citizenship and cohesion throughout the pandemic is by reflecting explicitly on what it has meant for our school values of compassion, ambition and respect. Rather than taking a completely different approach to our citizenship teaching, we have simply put greater emphasis on curriculum areas that we think are most important for pupils to understand for their academic progress and personal development. For example, we adapted our approach with Year 7 pupils in the autumn term: they began by considering approaches to volunteering and other forms of responsible activity. This enabled them to reflect on the national efforts during the pandemic, discussing their own endeavours in the school and wider local community, such as supporting the local food bank. We also taught about why the government removed freedoms from people in order to keep us safe, which deepened their understanding of the role of government and law in our society.

This approach was really successful both in deepening knowledge and reinforcing understanding of key citizenship concepts from key stage 2, as well as helping the pupils apply knowledge to a new context.

We have structured the curriculum methodically to introduce and embed knowledge and understanding of key concepts such as identity, justice and democracy, which are not only important in themselves, but also have strong links to curriculum content in other subject disciplines. We are very keen to ensure that our citizenship teaching provides pupils with powerful academic knowledge that supports their progress through the wider school curriculum.

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Computing

Adjusting the curriculum should focus on any missed knowledge that is crucial for pupils' next steps. This will be particularly important in hierarchical aspects such as programming, algorithms, understanding computers, and data. Priority should also be given to using computing devices safely and responsibly, although this will depend on pupils' previous exposure to and experience of technology.

At key stages 1 and 2:

- teachers should give priority to developing pupils' knowledge of algorithms, notably sequencing in key stage 1.

At key stage 2:

- teachers should focus on sequencing, selection and repetition.

- Pupils should be given enough time to practise programming to secure knowledge of key programming constructs.

- Gaps in knowledge of how to use digital devices should be identified and addressed. It is important that pupils use devices confidently and competently, so that they can focus on complex tasks without also having to learn how to use a device, which may otherwise get in the way of processing information.

At key stage 3:

- teachers should give priority to practical elements and core foundational knowledge that pupils may have missed in key stage 2.

- It is important that curriculum adjustments enable pupils to have repeated encounters of programming in a text-based programming language and that their knowledge of programming fundamentals, such as sequence, selection and repetition, is secure.

- It is likely that pupils will have missed out on purposeful opportunities to use different types of software packages and other applications. Teachers should identify what important knowledge pupils have missed from the lack of such opportunities.

When planning practical activity, teachers should consider pupils' equal access to devices, while at the same time ensuring that the more experienced and knowledgeable users of technology continue to be challenged.

The National Centre for Computing Education and Network of Computing Hubs support schools to provide high-quality computing education to all young people.

Harminder Brom, Assistant Headteacher and Initial Teacher Training lead for Computer Science at Ark Victoria, reflects on how they have prioritised practical elements in their key stage 3 curriculum.

At Ark Victoria we are focusing on the practical elements of computer science, now that all pupils are in the classroom again and have access to specialist software and explicit modelling. However, in doing this, we have been careful not to compromise the intention of our planned curriculum for computing or dilute our vision for the subject.

When attendance was first restricted in March 2020, we established the foundational content that pupils needed to cover to enable them to access the rest of the curriculum when they returned. For example, it is necessary to understand the basics of programming (using loops, receiving inputs and producing outputs) before you can write more advanced code using subroutines, and reading and writing to a file.

Frequent, low-stakes testing helped to identify gaps that needed addressing (either in pupils' knowledge of programming theory or their coding practice) before moving on to new content.

Pupils are set extra work through MS Teams to allow them to study independently or they are invited to attend small group interventions after school for additional support when they need it.

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Design & Technology

To engage in the design process, pupils need to know the different factors that contribute to complex design decisions. Securing knowledge of the relevant materials, equipment, tools and manufacturing methods is therefore important before pupils are expected to design their own products.

At key stages 1 and 2, teachers should prioritise:

- developing pupils' ability to design by, first, providing them with knowledge of materials, equipment and tools to support their application of concepts such as 'functionality' and 'aesthetics'. Activities to consolidate and embed this knowledge can be low cost, for example, asking pupils to evaluate a range of similar products (such as toothbrushes, toys, cutlery, t-shirts, or school bags).

- encouraging pupils to work with a range of simple materials, including textiles and ingredients, emphasising the design process rather than simply the end product.

Where practicable, pupils should be introduced to simple tools and their safe use to meet an identified need.

At key stage 3:

- pupils should expand their knowledge of the subject to solve a wider range of design problems. Teachers should emphasise knowledge of manufacturing and technology, which builds on what pupils know about materials and supports them to make complex design decisions to achieve a particular outcome. For example, teachers may wish to review their curriculum plans to re-emphasise the four main manufacturing methods, i.e. subtraction, addition, forming and assembly.

- Pupils should develop their understanding of the importance of design in creating a better and more sustainable world.

When teachers are confident that this prerequisite knowledge is secure, they should encourage pupils to design and make solutions to real problems. For example, where pupils have been away from the workshop for a prolonged period, priority might be given to engaging them in practical activities that will support their development into key stage 4 and beyond. The focus should not be on completing 'projects' but on pupils' deliberate and structured practice of the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in the subject.

It is important that key stage 3 pupils should cook and learn about nutrition as soon as it is practicable, while still observing set hygiene regulations (as detailed by CLEAPSS). Pupils should be given opportunities to engage in cooking and making to a level of

proficiency and automaticity that will support their progression to key stage 4 and beyond.

Kate Finlay from Hethersett Academy explains how carefully planned lessons, strong formative assessment and creative responses to practical challenges have allowed them to plan an effective curriculum to ensure pupil progress.

On our return to the classroom, we decided to prioritise teaching core concepts so that pupils have a strong knowledge base. For example, rather than attempting to cover a range of different computer-controlled equipment, as we have done in previous years, we chose to focus particularly on 3D printing. This choice still enabled us to cover key content like .stl file drawings and moving between 2D and 3D images without overloading pupils' working memory.

We use formative assessment such as planned 'do now' tasks and quick-recall quizzes to identify knowledge gaps. By using targeted questioning, we have been able to monitor improvements in pupils' understanding and adapt the curriculum where we found significant gaps.

We also considered what could be delivered pragmatically in the context of ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. For example, in key stage 3 food and nutrition, we prioritised pre-teaching the relevant knowledge before adapting the practical task to minimise the equipment used. Instead of our usual range of practicals, we focused primarily on bread making, using plastic pint glasses for measuring; pupils practised their knife skills by cutting vegetables.

In some cases, videos have replaced practical work. For example, teachers have recorded videos of the process of brazing or how to thread a sewing machine.

We have also used visualisers extensively to demonstrate detailed, practical techniques, where, traditionally, close one-to-one support would have been given (in soldering, for example). Interleaving practical and theoretical aspects and gradually consolidating pupils' practical skills, alongside a strong focus on knowledge, have supported pupils to regain their confidence in the classroom.

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English

At key stage 2, leaders should prioritise:

- assessment of pupils' decoding skill to identify those who are at risk of failing to learn to read
- systematic synthetic phonics teaching for all pupils who still need it, with plenty of practice
- sufficient time for reading and writing, including phonics for spelling.

Frequent reading should be a priority. It should happen not simply in English lessons but also in other subjects, such as history, so that pupils learn from what they read. They should also have time to read for pleasure. Since fluency is important for comprehension, practising reading should be a priority. Reading across the curriculum, not simply in English lessons, also uses teaching time efficiently.

As at key stage 1, teachers should continue to read to all pupils so that they experience what it is like to enjoy and become immersed in a book.

Shorter writing tasks rather than extended pieces allow pupils to focus on sentence structure and spelling.

Dictation of sentences that includes the words pupils have been taught to spell can be effective in helping them to consolidate spelling, handwriting and punctuation. Dictation also provides a simple way of assessing what needs to be taught or re-learnt, especially for spelling.

Time should be given for pupils to practise their handwriting regularly to increase its fluency, legibility and quality.

At key stage 3:

In year 7, teachers should identify and tackle weaknesses in reading and writing, including grammar, punctuation and spelling. Rapid and effective action may be required, as outlined in 'Extra support'.

'Appendix 1: Spelling' of the national curriculum sets out statutory content and non-statutory guidance that would be helpful for identifying words that year 7 pupils should be able to spell.

'Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation' provides a useful framework for identifying knowledge that may need refreshing and consolidating for year 7 pupils and, if necessary, also for others.

Teachers should prioritise:

- promoting, nurturing and monitoring pupils' reading, including reading aloud and guided reading as a class, giving them time to read independently where their reading is secure, and supporting them to choose books
- rich discussion that facilitates the sharing of ideas, knowledge and experiences
- mastery of writing at sentence level, including modelling, practice, feedback and redrafting.

Shared class readers provide ample opportunities for teachers to engage pupils in reading rich and challenging texts, model fluent reading and initiate discussion.

Amy Coombe from Jane Austen College, Norwich, describes how the English team approached prioritising their key stage 3 curriculum.

Throughout the pandemic, we have made minimal changes to the curriculum, aiming to maintain its rigour and ambition. However, we identified lessons where we could recap powerful knowledge that pupils had initially encountered during remote teaching. For example, we taught year 7 poetry conventions when studying an anthology of sonnets remotely and then revisited this knowledge when studying Romantic poetry in year 8.

We carefully planned and sequenced low-stakes formative assessments to ensure we were able to diagnose and address gaps in pupils' knowledge of priority content. When we identified significant gaps, we adapted lessons to ensure thorough re-teaching. For example, assessments revealed that pupils lacked confidence when planning and writing well-structured arguments about themes and characters. We therefore prioritised the modelling of writing.

Before we returned to school, we selected the most powerful and versatile knowledge from units taught remotely and ensured we revisited this. For example, when studying 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', we were keen pupils understood how Shakespeare uses dramatic irony to create comedy. Understanding this is more versatile knowledge than knowing the plot in detail, because pupils will revisit dramatic irony in multiple other texts later. It is also important because pupils will draw comparisons between genres as they move onto further study of Shakespeare in future years. Therefore, we prioritised specific examples of dramatic irony and exemplification of the comedy genre in re-teaching aspects of the play.

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Geography

In all key stages, to make sure pupils have gained adequate knowledge of different places, teaching can explore a few well-chosen locations in some depth. Prioritising the regular use of atlases and maps can reinforce pupils' locational knowledge and their sense of place.

Geographical fieldwork remains important throughout key stages 1 to 3. Please see the Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) for the Department for Education's latest advice regarding educational visits.

At key stage 1:

- key knowledge and skills, including basic locational knowledge such as the names and locations of the world's continents and oceans, should be the focus to address missed education and provide the basis for knowledge that will be needed later.

At key stage 2:

- curriculum adjustments should prioritise critical underpinning knowledge, such as weather and climate, geology, topography, trade links, and natural resources and their distribution.

Schools might choose to teach these concepts using an example of a region (for example, the Amazon rainforest). These aspects of geography, as well as locational knowledge, are fundamental to pupils' understanding of the interconnectedness of geography, as seen for example through biomes, or the location and development of settlements. A secure grasp of this underpinning knowledge will ensure that they are ready to learn subsequent knowledge about human and physical processes.

At key stage 3:

- the curriculum should stress the importance of the interconnection between human and/or physical processes, the location(s) studied and the effects on people and the environment. In doing so, pupils will gain a depth of knowledge and build a stronger sense of place.

Francesca Perry, Executive Principal of Harris Academy Chobham, describes how her geography department approached prioritising their key stage 2 curriculum.

In the geography department at Harris, we worked together to identify the curriculum content in our medium-term plans that is most important for progression. This has

enabled teachers to prioritise making sure that pupils remember, understand and can apply this key knowledge.

To make time to consolidate and reinforce important content in this way, we have chosen to reduce the number of long and complex tasks we give to pupils, keeping tasks short and snappy instead. We also use quick recap quizzes at the start of every lesson to check that pupils have retained important prior knowledge.

We also used the online programme Nearpod, which provides question-level analysis of pupils' knowledge and understanding, to create formative assessments. Teachers used the outcomes of these tests to determine what to re-teach. When gaps overlapped with the key knowledge we had also identified in our curriculum plans, this became a priority. For example, we set pupils a multiple-choice quiz on Italy. Their answers showed us that, although Year 4 pupils showed a really good understanding of volcanic and mountainous areas, their understanding of the different Italian regions was less strong. As a result, we focused our teaching on the regions.

Lack of fieldwork has been a key challenge for teaching geography during the pandemic. For example, during the autumn term, year 6 pupils would normally visit the village of Battlesbridge for a comparison study with our local area. Since this is important to future study in our curriculum, we designed a virtual fieldtrip instead. In class, we modelled how to use maps, photos and satellite images in Google Earth to 'visit' our local neighbourhood. Homework is an integral part of our curriculum as it gives pupils the opportunity to practise and reinforce what has been taught, so pupils used the same techniques to visit Battlesbridge remotely. In the following lesson, teachers discussed what pupils had found; questioning elicited and tackled misconceptions before pupils practised comparing the two places. We still hope to visit the village in person, when restrictions allow, so that pupils can fully appreciate the differences between a real place and its digital representation.

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History

In history, priority curriculum content should focus on the specific knowledge that will be critical for progression. Teachers may choose to return to previous or missed topics with a clear focus on the knowledge that is most important for future study.

At key stage 1:

- Priority curriculum content should include a range of sufficiently detailed period-specific knowledge.

- Pupils should have the opportunity to situate this knowledge in relation to other significant historical events studied.

- Teachers will also need to give pupils opportunities to learn about particular people and places through records and artefacts.

At key stage 2 and key stage 3:

- Teachers should continue to select content that illustrates the prioritised knowledge. This will establish strong foundations for studying a wider range of periods, with greater complexity, in the future.

- Teachers should regularly locate this knowledge in wider timelines so pupils gradually gain a sense of the chronological relationship between different historical events and periods.

- Teachers will also need to develop pupils' knowledge of how historians study the past and construct historical arguments (for example, considering what makes claims valid or invalid).

Historical knowledge and knowledge of how historians work support each other, so pupils will not develop one without the other. It is likely to be less effective to focus on 'source skills', for example, in isolation, than to study, in diverse contexts, how historians approach sources and evidence.

Dr Jo Pearson, head of the Research School at Great Heights Trust describes the approach that one of their academies, The Greetland Academy, Halifax have taken to curriculum prioritisation at key stage 2.

When reflecting on what to prioritise for our history curriculum at The Greetland Academy, two key principles governed our choices: the foundational knowledge and concepts that underpin future study; and the linking of narratives which frame our curriculum. Although it is possible in history to study Henry VIII without knowing much

about Henry VII, we have a particular focus on building pupils' chronological understanding and take care to structure historical narratives around clear timelines.

To identify which areas to focus on, we identified the links that make our curriculum coherent from reception to year 6. We then asked ourselves a number of questions to help focus our curriculum thinking. What did children already know about these narratives from British History and the history of the wider world? What is the core knowledge they would need to remember from this year to be able to continue to build those narrative pictures of the past? And, finally, where were the greatest opportunities to develop literacy?

We used these questions to shape our curriculum, providing pupils with a sharper focus on prioritised content. For example, in years 3 to 5 we have focused on how ordinary people lived in Stone Age settlements, during Roman slavery, and while farming in Anglo Saxon Britain. By setting Halifax (our hometown) within a wider geographical and chronological narrative, we can provide pupils with the foundational knowledge they need to succeed in their local history topic in year 6, as well as giving them a strong basis for wider historical understanding in the future.

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Languages

Knowledge of phonics, vocabulary and grammar is essential for the 'skills', or modalities, of listening, speaking, reading and writing. To make progress in understanding and producing language requires learning and being able to combine and apply such knowledge with increasing fluency in different contexts through a planned and sequenced curriculum, with input and targeted practice firmly built in.

Teachers in key stage 2 and 3 should:

- identify and teach essential vocabulary for progression.
- make sure pupils have a strong mastery of the sound and spelling system
- prioritise grammar.

The best way to identify essential vocabulary is on the basis of its frequency. Pupils need to encounter and use core vocabulary multiple times, in different contexts, to remember it well.

Teachers should revisit and practise spelling and pronunciation principles systematically. They are likely to be difficult for pupils because they are different from those in English. Pupils learning French, in particular, will need more time to become confident in pronunciation and spelling than those learning Spanish or German.

Most grammar is likely to be important for future progression. It is critical that it is learnt sequentially, practised adequately and revisited frequently. For example, if pupils are not confident in manipulating common verbs such as 'have', 'be', 'do' and 'go', progress will be more difficult. Teachers need to identify and re-teach such verbs, giving pupils ample time for practising them. Ideally, grammar should be taught frequently, in relatively small chunks, so that pupils' working memory is not overloaded and to help them to remember it. For example, introducing whole verb tables in one go is likely to be less effective than asking pupils to practise two or three regular or irregular forms.

The NCELP – National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy (NCELP) provides further support, including fully resourced schemes of work for French, German and Spanish for key stage 3.

Ashley Harrold, headteacher at Blatchington Mill School in Hove, reflects on how they have prioritised their language curriculum at key stage 3.

In the MFL department, we worked collaboratively to identify the curriculum content that is critical to pupils' progress. Due to the cumulative nature of language learning,

we decided to prioritise the central pillars of our curriculum: phonics, vocabulary and grammar.

We tested pupils' ability to recall the form, meaning and use of the vocabulary and grammar principles we had taught them. We then used the understanding this gave us of their common knowledge gaps and misconceptions to further inform the precise curriculum content we needed to prioritise. We provided a six-week period of consolidation when pupils all returned to the classroom, during which time we re-taught content that was both central to their progress and also represented a common knowledge gap or misconception.

For example, testing revealed that year 8 pupils studying French generally did not have a strong grasp of the regular -er verb inflection in the present tense. We therefore explicitly re-taught the relevant grammatical principles and provided numerous opportunities for meaningful practice of these in reading, listening, writing and speaking exercises. This has resulted not only in improved pupil outcomes, but also more linguistic confidence, which is an essential component of language learning.

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Mathematics

When deciding what to teach to support education recovery most effectively, leaders can help all pupils by focusing on making sure they are fluent and confident in the facts and methods that they most frequently need in order to be successful with further study. In the context of missed education, it remains crucial to take the time to practise, rather than moving through curriculum content too quickly. What pupils already know is key. Progressing to teaching new content when pupils are not secure with earlier content limits their chances of making good progress later.

The sequence of teaching mathematical content is also very important: gaps need to be filled before new content is taught.

At key stages 1 and 2:

The Department for Education (DfE) has published 'Ready-to-progress criteria: year 1 to year 6' that shows how the curriculum can be sequenced and prioritised effectively.

The guidance:

- identifies the core concepts and procedures that pupils need in order to progress in their study of mathematics and shows how they can build their proficiency from year 1 to year 6

- defines core content and concepts as ready-to-progress criteria, which provide a coherent, linked framework to support pupils' mastery of the primary mathematics curriculum.

At key stage 3, teachers should:

- link algebraic techniques explicitly with arithmetic structures covered in the primary curriculum to support new knowledge

- maintain and expand pupils' fluency developed at primary school, for example by bringing out opportunities to use numbers in different formats (i.e. fractions and decimals)

- make sure that pupils develop a good knowledge of multiplicative structures to provide a firm foundation for study in key stage 4.

The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics has produced a range of resources that can support curriculum planning for primary and secondary schools. At key stage 3, this includes videos on teaching key topics, information on how to use primary curriculum guidance to support year 7 transition, and detailed professional development materials which can support curriculum structuring.

Tony Head, head of school at Portswood Primary School, Southampton, reflects on planning for the KS2 mathematics curriculum on returning to full attendance.

In the maths department at Portswood Primary School, we revisited our planned curriculum and made amendments to concentrate on teaching the core mathematical concepts identified as vital for pupils' progression through the curriculum.

To identify these concepts, we began with an initial period of low-stakes assessment to highlight curriculum areas that pupils were not secure in, following remote teaching, with assessment taking place through starters (or warm-ups). This gave us a long-list of curriculum areas we knew we would need to focus on.

Alongside this, we made careful use of the DfE's guidance on teaching mathematics in primary schools. This approach helped us to prioritise our initial list to really home in on the particular aspects of maths that are most important for future study. For example, it is crucial that pupils have a secure knowledge of addition and subtraction, as this is a prerequisite for more complex maths, such as being able to recognise right angles in triangles. We have therefore deferred geometry until pupils have had more opportunities to embed their understanding of and fluency in number.

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Music

While planning their curriculum, schools may wish to refer to the recently published Model Music Curriculum, which is non-statutory guidance to help teach music at key stages 1, 2 and 3.

A key priority in all key stages is a curriculum which allows a return to practical music-making through singing and playing instruments (including music technology). To ensure the safety of pupils and staff, this should be done in line with the DfE's current Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance and with the guidance issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Local Music Education Hubs should also be able to provide guidance and support as performance activities are reintroduced.

At key stage 1:

- the music curriculum should maintain its focus on increasing pupils' accuracy, fluency and expression through singing and playing a range of instruments.

- Singing familiar songs together, concentrating on intonation, phrasing and clear diction, and adding simple rhythmic accompaniments can help to build pupils' confidence and quickly develop their listening skills.

At key stages 2 and 3:

The focus should be on the technical knowledge and skills that pupils have not been able to practise or develop sufficiently through performance or composition work when they have not been in school.

- More attention should be given to the extent to which pupils have missed the opportunity to develop their instrumental and singing skills, or their knowledge of constructive elements such as scales, chords and musical forms.

- Close consideration should be given to the order in which key components are taught or re-taught, so that these important skills can be rebuilt deliberately and incrementally.

As schools reintroduce pupils to practical music-making, they should also focus on their aural development, which is important in rebuilding their expressive knowledge and understanding of music.

This includes:

- providing effective feedback on pupils' musical responses or choices, showing them how to resolve their musical difficulties and correcting inaccuracies

- training pupils' musical hearing to appraise, shape and improve their performances and compositions.

When work during remote education focused on theoretical knowledge about music, schools should ensure that pupils are given every opportunity to secure that knowledge through practical musical activity.

Equally, while many teachers have made creative use of technologies to create ensemble 'performances' during the restrictions, schools should plan how they can reintroduce in-person ensemble activities. Well-organised ensemble activities can:

- help pupils to develop mature aural skills
- build their confidence and support their wellbeing
- play an important part in re-building school communities, particularly when performances to an audience are permitted.

Finally, schools should take every opportunity – both through and outside the school curriculum – to foster pupils' re-engagement with a wide range of music.

Further support can be found through the Music Education Hubs which bring together local authorities, schools and art, community or voluntary organisations to make sure all pupils have access to music education.

Subject leads at Inspiration Trust outline how they have adapted their curriculum to ensure pupils make strong progress in music.

At Inspiration Trust, we follow a trust-wide common core curriculum that is developed collaboratively. Our music curriculum prioritises the powerful knowledge that we believe our pupils are entitled to, so that we ensure pupils are engaging with music that reflects their interests but crucially also goes beyond them. This is acquired through parallel learning and applying practical skills, knowledge of musical sound, and verbal knowledge. As a core, pupils listen to and study works selected from Western classical music, including film music. We also include other musical styles, including popular and folk, to ensure that pupils have a deepening knowledge of how musicians through time have learnt from one another.

Where pupils have focused on theoretical aspects of the music curriculum during partial school closures, we have since taken the opportunity to reintroduce them to the practical elements of music to support aural development, primarily through singing.

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Physical education

When making decisions about curriculum prioritisation, schools may need to adjust the curriculum to give priority to supporting pupils to be physically active and confident in fundamental movement skills, as well as developing the complexity and accuracy of movement patterns.

Schools should use time to revisit knowledge of the conventions of specific sports and activities, through which pupils' enjoyment and confidence will be rebuilt.

At key stage 1 and 2:

- it is a priority to develop and refine pupils' fundamental movement skills in a variety of contexts, including dance and game-based activities.

Moving into key stage 2:

- each context will require different knowledge to develop competency. For example, developing attacking and defending strategies in netball and football will require pupils, in each case, to remember and understand different knowledge.

- Swimming and water safety should remain a priority at key stage 2, if not secured at key stage 1.

At key stages 3 and 4:

- teachers should focus on engaging pupils physically in increasingly complex situations so that they refine their knowledge of movement and apply the specific conventions.

- Pupils should continue to develop a range of movement patterns alongside their knowledge of the rules, strategies and tactics for the activities, including healthy participation.

If some pupils wish to follow leadership pathways or officiating routes, this should be done in addition to PE curriculum activities.

Fran Day, Associate Assistant Principal at Harris Garrard Academy, discusses how they have adapted their PE curriculum

In the PE department, we wanted to do everything we could to support pupils to be physically active when they all returned to the school site. To achieve this, we adapted our curriculum by focusing on sports such as handball, netball, badminton, lacrosse and frisbee. These were activities that pupils had already encountered during their previous PE lessons, so they had acquired the important building blocks of movement,

and the knowledge of participation they needed to engage actively with each one. Teachers could quickly ascertain what pupils had remembered and then modify their instruction so that pupils could develop more complex knowledge. During these small-sided practices, pupils engaged more actively and the teacher was able to provide more bespoke feedback to improve each pupil's participation.

From assessing pupils' knowledge, a significant gap was evident in their understanding of how to develop fitness. As a result, we decided to focus on this wherever possible, making sure we selected activities to teach pupils how fitness for each activity could be developed. All PE staff could share their expertise of fitness components and methods to train to improve fitness for participation, so that pupils received an accurate and consistent instruction.

Modifying what we teach has enabled us to maintain the rich breadth of sports and physical activities within our PE curriculum that we know is important to increase pupils' motor competence, knowledge of rules, strategies and tactics, and healthy participation.

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Relationships, sex and health education

The law requires schools to provide some relationships, sex and health education to all secondary-age pupils in the academic year 2020/21, and to provide some relationships and health education to all primary-age pupils. Schools are also required to publish a Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy and to consult parents on it.

The content in the statutory RSHE guidance is broken down into topic areas, differentiated by primary and secondary level rather than by key stage. As set out in the schools coronavirus operational guidance, teaching in the 2021/22 academic year should seek to address any gaps in pupils' RSHE education in 2020/21.

Schools will want to consider adjusting the curriculum to prioritise topics that will best support pupils to re-engage with their peers in school. These include:

- mental wellbeing, physical health and fitness, respectful relationships and being safe.

Prioritising content about safety should reflect risks that may have increased over the pandemic, such as online exploitation, abuse and grooming. All content should remain age-appropriate and be taught clearly but sensitively.

A focus on the changing adolescent body for pupils in year 6, and intimate and sexual relationships for pupils in year 11 will support them as they move on from these phases of their education.

A subject lead from the Creative Education Trust reflects on their RSHE curriculum.

The RSHE department decided to prioritise topics such as physical health, mental health and wellbeing for all key stage 3 pupils, due to the known impact and effects of COVID-19 on these areas. For example, to support pupils with returning to school, we introduced lessons with a particular focus on friendship and building relationships to help them re-engage with their peers. We also taught self-management strategies and tolerance to give them the tools to help establish and follow a routine and structure.

During remote teaching, we used low-stakes testing to identify common gaps in pupils' knowledge and used this to work out what to revisit when schools fully reopened. For example, deciding to prioritise pupils' mental health and wellbeing was informed partly by the results of a short assessment that tested their knowledge and understanding of mental health. This process enabled us to focus our support on their specific needs over the past term.

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Religious education

Religious education remains compulsory for pupils in all year groups, in all local authority maintained schools and in academies.

If pupils develop thorough knowledge of a particular religion, its origins, settings, cultures, stories, sights and sounds, they will gain not only a secure sense of what a religion is but will also have a strong foundation for studying other religions. Teachers should therefore retain breadth of study within a religion. Otherwise, pupils may develop misconceptions about what it means to be religious and non-religious.

It may therefore be appropriate to concentrate teaching on two religions, in depth. Schools will find it useful to choose two contrasting religions, such as one Abrahamic and one Dharmic faith, to ensure pupils have a sense of the diversity of religions, as well as non-religious worldviews such as Humanism.

Pupils should be secure in basic ideas, teachings, stories and practices critical to religious and non-religious content. Specific examples might be ideas such as ‘dharma’, ‘sacred’ or ‘interpretation’.

It is more useful to prioritise subject-specific content than generic skills, since pupils require that content for more complex tasks, activities and discussions.

Focusing on curriculum content that emphasises connections between concepts supports pupils to make links. At key stage 1, concepts may be relatively few, with a greater range at key stages 2, 3 and 4. Rich stories, texts and accounts from within different traditions can support pupils’ understanding of such concepts.

For example:

- at key stage 1, stories such as the parable of the Good Shepherd can help pupils to make links between ideas of ‘Christ’, ‘community’, ‘disciple’ and ‘rescue’ in Christian traditions.

- at key stage 3, teachers may select Hindu festivals to show connections between ideas of ‘creation’, ‘oneness’, ‘interconnectedness’ and ‘diversity’ in Hindu ways of life.

Abby Hughes from West London Free School outlines her department’s approach to the curriculum at key stage 3.

We believe that our curriculum contains powerful knowledge that pupils should not leave school without. We plan lessons so that we can give maximum time to strengthening what they have already learnt and teaching new knowledge. We see the

subject content as the most engaging and important element of the lesson, and so we design the tasks pupils complete to serve this content best.

Pupils complete regular low-stakes quizzes to assess their ability to recall key vocabulary, definitions and dates. The quizzes help to transfer knowledge to long-term memory and allow staff to identify gaps.

The careful sequencing of our curriculum is integral to addressing these gaps; the curriculum is planned so that we reinforce knowledge and build on it, enabling pupils to understand more complex, general ideas as they progress. We know that ideas we have taught previously will feature again in future lessons. For example, the Biblical account of the Fall of Humanity is studied at the start of year 7, referred to throughout the Old Testament unit, and then in later units on the New Testament (year 7), Christianity (year 8) and Philosophy of Religion (year 9). As such, we can continue with new content and build in recap when it makes most sense.

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Science

The first step in adjusting the science curriculum is to identify the content in biology, chemistry and physics that is most important for enabling pupils to build up their knowledge of key scientific concepts.

At key stage 1:

- an example of content which will support future study is knowledge about herbivores because it allows pupils to learn about food chains in key stage 2. This, in turn, enables them to understand ecosystems in key stages 3 and 4.

At key stage 2:

- concepts that are beneficial to future study include, but are not limited to, forces, electricity, magnetism, materials and substance, reactions, nutrition, evolution and inheritance, ecosystems, properties and changes of materials.

At key stage 3:

- knowledge about the particle model is key content because it is a prerequisite for studying diffusion, pressure, density, osmosis and many other concepts.

The curriculum should also identify the most important procedures and concepts underpinning the scientific method that may not be as secure following remote teaching. Again, these decisions will be based on the role of these procedures and concepts in future study. For example, at key stage 2, it is more important that pupils know how to use a thermometer than a data logger, while the concept of a variable is fundamental to understanding reproducibility at key stage 3.

Ben Rogers, Director of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the Paradigm Trust, reflects on their approach to teaching science at key stage 2.

In key stage 2 science lessons at Paradigm Trust, we have put more emphasis on checking back on content taught in previous lessons. All lessons now begin with a recap of relevant prior knowledge as a starter activity. We use a lot of multiple-choice questions for quick, formative assessment.

Subject specialists in the trust have identified what is ‘the core of the core learning’ in biology, chemistry and physics. This is the knowledge that acts as a key to unlock the next stages of learning and hence is transformational for pupils’ ability to access and interpret the curriculum. For example, it is crucial to know that the observable characteristics and measurable properties of different materials can be used to group and categorise them. This enables pupils to understand that some materials change

state when they are heated or cooled, and means they can subsequently apply this knowledge to processes like the water cycle. Teachers are particularly encouraged to step back from the planned sequence to re-teach and practise such crucial content when pupils have not understood it.

Because our priorities for this year are core knowledge (both disciplinary and substantive) and literacy, we also decided to replace our usual English non-fiction programme with subject-specific non-fiction to maintain curriculum breadth while developing pupils' reading, writing and oracy. This included six weeks' focus on science non-fiction, such as texts describing how blackberry and dandelion seeds travel differently. This has supported pupils' confidence in, knowledge of and enthusiasm for science.

We use comparative judgement to ensure the reliability of our summative judgements about pupils' writing. This enables us to identify specific gaps in knowledge or skills quickly and efficiently.

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