Eynsham Partnership Academy Trust

A Knowledge-Based Curriculum - Our Intent

‘Higher-order thinking is knowledge-based: The almost universal feature of reliable higher-order thinking about any subject or problem is the possession of a broad, well integrated base of background knowledge relevant to the subject’. (E.D. Hirsch (1996) The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them p152)

‘Reading, writing and all communication depend on taken-for-granted background knowledge that is not directly expressed in what is written. Therefore, in order to teach children how to understand what is written, we must teach them that taken-for-granted background knowledge’. (E.D. Hirsch (2006) The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children p122)

Why a knowledge-based curriculum?

- Precisely specifying knowledge ensures easier design of activities and assessment of learning.
- Knowledge acts as ‘building blocks’ of learning – enabling development of conceptual understanding and a basis for ‘higher-order’ thinking.
- Knowledge, and its relationship to memory and cognition, is a central element of cognitive science learning approaches.

We believe that*:

Knowledge needs concepts

Knowledge facts need to be underpinned by concepts and need to be taught explicitly

Knowledge is subject based

Knowledge needs to be situated in and be protected within the discipline

Knowledge needs to be remembered

Knowledge is taught to be remembered, not merely encountered

Knowledge should be sequenced and progressive

Knowledge is sequenced and mapped deliberately and coherently

The EPA Approach

Knowledge is the core element of our curricula. All curriculum experiences and skill development are centred around subject based knowledge progression.

Knowledge, Concepts and Vocabulary Organisers (KCVs)

Our Knowledge-based Curriculum also includes concepts, vocabulary and sometimes skills for each curriculum area. Initially we are aiming to develop KCVs for history, geography and science. KCVs outline the main knowledge covered in each curriculum area.

KCV Principles

Principles	So that…
KCVs are stuck in children's books at the beginning of each unit. These form the minimum level of knowledge that all children will learn.	Children, teachers and parents are clear about what KCVs are being taught and assessed in each unit.
There is a clear link between the KCV of each unit and the sequence of lessons which intend to facilitate the learning of this content	All lessons are designed to teach and assess the KCVs intended within the unit.
Each unit contains an assessment of the KCV	Teachers know how successful their teaching has been – and what 'gaps' in learning need to be addressed.
Attention is paid to any gaps in learning uncovered by the unit assessment	Any 'gaps' in children's learning are reduced which will help children link future, more complex, knowledge to previous learning.

* Appendix 1 EPA Knowledge Curriculum Principles

Knowledge needs concepts

Knowledge facts need to be underpinned by concepts and need to be taught explicitly Concepts are 'holding baskets' for facts. They help to make sense of multiple pieces of information. Concepts are largely, but not exclusively, expressions of important ideas within an academic discipline. Concepts enable connections to be made across a range of facts; they reside in the long-term memory and can be called on to make sense of new information. Concepts provide the intellectual architecture onto which new knowledge and insights can be pinned.

Knowledge is subject based

Knowledge needs to be situated in and be protected within the discipline It is important to maintain a clear distinction between the interdisciplinary and the cross-curricular. Interdisciplinary keeps the integrity of subject-specific knowledge intact. Links across a curriculum add additional richness and complexity to a subject. However, a key question should always be: *What is the main idea that we want pupils to think about?*

Knowledge needs to be remembered

Knowledge is taught to be remembered, not merely encountered: A good knowledge-rich curriculum embraces learning from cognitive science about memory, forgetting and the power of retrieval practice. A curriculum is not simply a set of encounters from which children form ad hoc memories; it is designed to be remembered in detail; to be stored in students' long-term memories so that they can later build on it, forming ever wider and deeper schema. This requires approaches to curriculum planning and delivery that build in spaced retrieval practice, formative low-stakes testing and plenty of repeated practice for automaticity and fluency.

Knowledge should be sequenced and progressive

Knowledge is sequenced and mapped deliberately and coherently: Beyond the knowledge specified for each unit, a knowledge-rich curriculum is planned vertically and horizontally giving thought to the best ways of sequencing knowledge to build secure schema. Attention is also given to the instructional tools needed to move students from novice to expert in each subject.

Sources: https://teacherhead.com/2018/06/06/what-is-a-knowledge-rich-curriculum-principle-and-practice/

https://impact.chartered.college/article/building-curriculum-coherence/