

Curriculum Design - A Conceptual Approach

The Highfields Spencer curriculum is designed to make remembering almost inevitable. It is a strategically planned 3-dimensional curriculum made up of knowledge, skills and concepts to be learned and understood. These have carefully been knitted together to promote understanding at a conceptual level, allowing for key concepts and vocabulary to be reinforced. A conceptual approach promotes inquiry, which leads to intellectual engagement.

Our ultimate goal is to develop conceptual thinkers. Conceptual thinking requires the ability to examine factual information critically, relate new learning to prior knowledge, see patterns and connections, draw out significant understandings, evaluate the truth based on evidence and most importantly, transfer these conceptual understandings across time or situation, and use the conceptual understanding to creatively solve a problem or invent a new product.

Global Themes

Our curriculum has been designed to revisit and build on key concepts throughout the Highfields Journey. This ensures that the knowledge and skills contribute to core understandings and values. The 'global themes' are designed to be built upon each year, with a clear progression and links across subjects, so that the children will have a deeper understanding and ability to transfer their knowledge and skills to new contexts.

The global themes that children explore and revisit across all year groups are: Identity, Diversity, and Equality, Transformations, Significance, Global Awareness and Sustainability, Peace and Conflict, and Enterprise.

Creative Curriculum

History and Geography topics are the main drivers for the Creative Curriculum. The topics have been chosen and arranged to ensure that children develop the knowledge, skills and understandings with a clear, meaningful progression. The curriculum has been designed with many links, building on previous learning. Each foundation subject topic has been carefully considered under the global themes and topic links.

Core Subjects

Mathematics lessons follow the White Rose sequence and are structured to ensure that children develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Writing is taught in blocks, that can stretch up to three weeks. The clear structure and sequence of learning ensures that children are able to apply skills independently whilst sharing their creativity.

The science curriculum has been organised to ensure that conceptual understandings build on those explored in the humanities. Each topic has been considered under the global themes.

Conceptual Lens

Each global theme is a conceptual lens. Information for each subject has been carefully organized and prioritised to deepen the understanding of the concepts.

The global themes are a 'coat hanger' on which to hang new knowledge. The conceptual lens uses an idea or concept to bring focus and depth to a topic, facilitating the transfer of understanding and ensuring that connected thinking between being able to know, do and understand. Students develop their skills and knowledge by linking and thinking deeply about the relationship it has to the global theme.

The conceptual lens allows the children to bring to the learning, their previous knowledge and understanding of the global theme, so we are not starting from scratch every time. It happens on purpose; we are not hoping it will happen by accident.

Well-Being

Many of our pupils have unsettled weekends and when attending school on a Monday, are not ready to access the normal everyday curriculum. We have designed our timetable, to enable pupil's opportunities to develop their emotional wellbeing on a Monday using, Jour assembly as a stimulus.

This 'Mindful Monday', promotes positive attitudes and behaviour towards learning, introducing the week gradually, rather than abruptly. During our 'Personal Development Curriculum' pupils use peer massage to establish a healthy mindset.