



Hill West Primary School



Pedagogical Newsletter – February 2020

Reading

We know that children who read only one book a day hear about 290,000 more words by age 5 than those who don't regularly read books with a parent or care giver (Logan, 2019). We know that children who read regularly for enjoyment everyday not only perform better in reading tests than those that don't but also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures. Therefore, at Hill West it is our unquestionable duty to read to our children and expose them to the joys of story language while teaching them systematic synthetic phonics so that our children are fluent, independent readers by the age of 7. You can help us achieve this aspiration by reading to your child at bedtime each night. We would ask that you do this throughout your child's time in primary, even after they can read classic and modern texts for themselves.



Issue 27
February 2020

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Reminders:

School closes for half term on Friday 14th February.

School reopens on Monday 24th February. I hope you all have a lovely half term holiday.

The Curriculum at Hill West

Our whole school curriculum has been designed, developed and refined over many years. High aspirations underpin our curriculum philosophy and we want our children to flourish socially, emotionally and academically through well-taught, progressive curriculum content. Building on relevant educational research, our curriculum has been responsive to the concepts of retrieval practice, interleaving learning and spaced retrieval. We understand that children make good progress across the curriculum and in individual subject disciplines when we build on their prior learning and the children remember more. We are committed to ensuring that learning is engaging but appreciate that to commit new knowledge or skills to the long-term memory, there is a need for regular retrieval, practice and consolidation. Our curriculum has been designed to ensure learning is durable in the longer term and can be transferred from one context to another.

We understand that semantic memory refers to the storing of information, facts or concepts 'context-free'; that is without the emotional and special / temporal context in which they were first acquired. We know these memories take effort and it's our pupils' amazing ability to store culturally-acquired learning in their semantic memory that leads to well-rounded, able young people. At Hill West building on our understanding of how children learn, our curriculum is taught through key questions that link different subject disciplines thematically. We do this so that children have well-developed schema underpinned by interconnected knowledge and skills. Our key questions that link the learning are designed to engage and inspire, improving children's ability to; ask questions, investigate, interrogate information, present and argue whilst developing a range of skills and deep knowledge. Alongside this children also receive a weekly subject-specific lesson that either reinforces prior learning through earlier linked learning, or introduces new learning that will be revisited during a subsequent key question.





Helping Children 'Thrive'

Glossary of Terms



Interleaving - is a process where students mix, or interleave, multiple subjects or topics while they study in order to improve their learning.

Retrieval practice - is a strategy in which bringing information to mind enhances and boosts learning. Deliberately recalling information forces us to pull our knowledge "out" and examine what we know. At Hill West, to support this, we plan

Spaced Retrieval - where learners rehearse information to be learned at different and increasing spaced intervals of time.

As you will recall from the last pedagogical newsletter Mrs Cook and I have been fortunate enough to attend Thrive training during the course of this year which has led to us being licenced as Thrive Practitioners. Thrive is a systematic approach to the early identification of emotional development need in children and young people so that differentiated provision can be put in place quickly by the adults working most closely with the child. It is preventative, reparative, pragmatic and based on highly effective relationships.

Addressing emotional developmental needs builds resilience and resourcefulness, decreases the risk of mental illness, reinvigorates the learning provision and helps those children who are at risk of underachieving or exclusion to stay in school and re-engage with learning.

Children come to school to get an education that will equip them for life. Many, indeed most, of our children do well in school. In some cases though, life has already proved to be harsh and unsupportive so that school provision may seem to have little to offer that will prove directly useful. Some of our brightest children may struggle to make best use of what their schools can offer. Their early experiences may not have equipped them with a stress-regulation system that enables them to settle, to feel safe, to concentrate, to be curious or to be willing to work alongside their peers in collaborative ways. The transition to 'school' may prove to be too much for some children. For others, the pressure of parental or societal expectations may prove to be overwhelming. Current neuroscience shows us that, for some children, their emotional regulation and stress-regulation systems have not yet been sufficiently well enough developed.

Thrive is useful for

All children: as it sets out the age-appropriate developmental tasks of children. This knowledge can be used to shape provision to make best use of life's learning opportunities. This enhances their emotional and social skills, improves their emotional wellbeing and develops their emotional literacy.

The vulnerable and challenging: those children whose early life experiences have not equipped them to manage their strong sensations and emotions well. These children might be under-achieving, or causing concern because of their behaviour. They may not be able to assess personal risk or function well in social situations

When life happens: for those who have had 'good-enough' experiences in their early life but who suddenly experience hurtful, shocking, strange or traumatic life events, such as a bereavement, a parent's redundancy, a depressive episode in a close relative or the death of a grandparent. When these life events happen, we all return to our most basic needs.

Thrive uses a developmental framework to clarify the connections between emotional and social development, behaviour and learning. In this developmental framework, child development is depicted as six strands of experience, each with accompanying tasks and opportunities. These translate into six fundamental aspects of learning for emotional and social development: learning to be; learning to do; learning to think; learning to be powerful and to have an identity; learning to be skilful and have structure; and learning to be independent. These aspects of learning can be thought of as six areas of competence. As the child grows, the developmental strands come 'online' sequentially – however once they are in place, they remain available and open to growth throughout life.

"Hitting an interruption in your development can feel like falling down a hole".



SAFEGUARDING – Bullying

All children have the right to learn and work in an environment where they feel safe and which is free from harassment and any bullying (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; Article 19).

Bullying is action taken by one or more children with the deliberate intention of hurting another child, either physically or emotionally. It is usually unprovoked, persistent and can continue for a long period of time. Bullying is wrong and damages individual children. We therefore do all we can to prevent it, by developing a school ethos in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable. We take positive action to prevent bullying behaviour through a combination of:

- ✓ Raising awareness about what bullying is and how it affects people;
- ✓ Emphasising the important role that bystanders play in tackling bullying;
- ✓ Teaching pupils how to safely challenge bullying behaviour;
- ✓ Teaching pupils how to manage their relationships constructively and assertively.

Parents, who are concerned that their child may be being bullied, or who suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying, should contact their child's class teacher immediately and ask for an urgent appointment to speak with them about their concerns. If the bullying persists then parents should ask to meet with their child's phase leader so that swift and decisive action can be taken by the school's leadership team.

Maths

At Hill West, we are committed to ensuring that all children are mathematically proficient and confident in the use of maths in their everyday lives. As such we teach for maths mastery designed to ensure all children develop a deep and sustainable understanding of age-appropriate mathematical concepts, which can be built upon in the future.

Building on relevant educational research, our maths curriculum has been responsive to the concepts of retrieval practice, interleaving learning and spaced retrieval. We understand that children need regular opportunities to revisit previous learning in order to commit mathematical understanding to the long term memory. As a result, at Hill West, we follow the progressive short blocks of interconnected concepts to ensure that children have regular opportunities to revisit and recall prior learning alongside acquiring new mathematical skills and knowledge through fluency, reasoning and problem solving.

When we plan our lessons and sequences of lessons we structure the learning so that all pupils work through new content together as a whole group. Although we do not differentiate the learning task by reducing the level of difficulty for certain groups, the questioning and scaffolding that individual children receive in class will differ. Tasks are set for all children of similar difficulty as the expectation is that "the majority of pupils will move through the programmes of study at broadly the same pace" (National Curriculum, 2014). Teachers allow time for children to fully understand, explore and apply ideas, rather than accelerate through new topics. Pupils' difficulties and misconceptions are identified through immediate formative assessment and addressed with rapid intervention. This approach enables pupils to truly grasp a concept. All children are supported in lessons by having the opportunity to make use of a range of resources, ensuring concrete, pictorial and abstract methods are accessible to all.

Fluency comes from deep knowledge and practice. At early stages, explicit teaching of multiplication tables is important in the journey towards fluency and contributes to quick and efficient mental calculation. Daily multiplication chanting and recall of the times tables is essential. At Hill West we teach multiplication tables in the following year groups so that children are proficient. Year 2 (2s, 5s and 10s), Year 3 (3s, 4s and 8s) and in Year 4 (6s, 7s, 9s, 11s and 12s). Please help us by learning these at home too.

Handwriting – why we no longer use pen licences

In the mind of a child suggests Sally Kawogoe (2019) the pen licence can often take on a disproportionate significance; a glaring signifier of those who are deemed good enough, and those who aren't. Moreover, it is clearly problematic for dyspraxic and less able-bodied children – some of whom may never receive a licence at all. In no other area of the curriculum do we restrict access to all but the most able. It is hard to imagine a class in which only those who have mastered grid references are allowed to look at an atlas. And above all else, depending on the design, many children may actually find it easier to write in pen than pencil. School's may be denying pupils the very tool that helps them reach the level prescribed. At Hill West we believe that exposure, rather than restriction, is generally regarded as a means to encourage and develop skills. The 2014 National Curriculum, which ironically ushered in such enthusiasm for the pen licence, actually states that in Years 5 and 6 children should be "choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task".

Rights Respecting Schools

There has never been a more important time to educate and empower the next generation with knowledge about their rights. Children are rarely in a position to stand up for their own rights – so the need for a legal framework that embeds and protects their best interests is vital. Whilst the government is still bound by the Human Rights Act 1998 and other domestic legislation that protects children's interest, every opportunity needs to be taken to strengthen children's rights. Importantly, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child which sets out the inalienable rights of every child, will continue to apply to the UK after its departure from the EU. Child Rights Education is an important step in cementing the rights of children and enabling them to become active citizens in this changing world.

