



Curriculum Intent Statement



At Westacre Middle School, we aim to foster a life-long love of learning, through adopting a practical and cross-curricular approach. Our Creative Curriculum aims to deliver a world class education that will equip our children with the skills required to be independent and responsible citizens. The curriculum matches our whole school vision, which fosters an atmosphere of inspiration, challenge and achievement. “Inspire. Challenge. Achieve”

Basic Principles

1. Learning over time is a change to long-term memory.
2. Our aims are to ensure that our students experience a wide breadth of study and opportunities and have, by the end of their time at Westacre, long-term memory of an ambitious body of procedural and semantic knowledge.

Curriculum Intent model

1. Our Curriculum drivers (diversity, aspirations and communication) shape our curriculum breadth. They are derived from an exploration of the backgrounds of our students, our beliefs about high quality education and our values. They are used to ensure we give our students appropriate and ambitious curriculum opportunities.
2. Cultural capital gives our students the vital background knowledge required to be informed and thoughtful members of our community who understand and believe in British values. This is achieved through careful text selection, a focus on vocabulary and the offer of a range of purposeful experiences.
3. Curriculum breadth is shaped by our curriculum drivers, cultural capital, subject topics and our ambition for students to study the best of what has been thought and said by many generations of academics and scholars.
4. Our curriculum distinguishes between subject topics and ‘key concepts’. Subject topics are the specific aspects of subjects that are studied.
5. Key concepts tie together the subject topics into meaningful schema within our skills progression maps. The same concepts are explored in a wide breadth of topics across all year groups. Through this ‘forwards-and-backwards engineering’ of the curriculum, students return to the same concepts over and over and gradually build understanding of them.
6. Knowledge categories in each subject give students a way of expressing their understanding of the key concepts and linking their learning across the year groups.
7. Knowledge webs help students to relate each topic to previously studied topics and to form strong, meaningful schema.

8. Cognitive science tell us that working memory is limited and that cognitive load is too high if students are rushed through content. This limits the acquisition of long-term memory. Cognitive science also tells us that in order for students to become creative thinkers, or have a greater depth of understanding they must first master the basics, before accessing deeper learning.
9. The goal for students is to display sustained mastery at the 'advancing' stage of understanding by the end of each year group and for the most able to have a greater depth of understanding at the 'deep' stage.
10. As part of our progression model we use a different pedagogical style in each of the cognitive domains of basic, advancing and deep. This is based on the research of Sweller, Kirschner and Rosenshine who argue to direct instruction in the early stages of learning and discovery based approaches later. We use direct instruction in the basic domain and problem based discovery in the deep domain. This is called the reversal effect.

Implementation

12. Our curriculum design is based on evidence from cognitive science; three main principles underpin it:
 - 13.1. Learning is most effective with spaced repetition.
 - 13.2. Interleaving helps pupils to discriminate between topics and aids long-term retention.
 - 13.3. Retrieval of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which increases both storage and retrieval strength.
13. In addition to the three principles we also understand that learning is invisible in the short-term and that sustained mastery takes time.
14. Our content is subject specific. We make intra-curricular links to strengthen schema.
15. Continuous provision, in the form of daily routines, replaces the teaching of some aspects of the curriculum and, in other cases, provides retrieval practice for previously learned content.

Impact

16. Because learning is a change to long-term memory it is impossible to see impact in the short term.
17. We look at the practices taking place to determine whether they are appropriate, related to our goals and likely to produce results in the long-run.
18. We use comparative judgement in two ways: in the tasks we set and in comparing a student's work over time.
19. We use school self evaluation processes to see if the pedagogical style matches our depth expectations
20. We use book scrutinies with pupils present to help us judge the impact on long term memory.