

Lancasterian Primary School

Topic Policy



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1	February 2017	Governors	+2 years	February 2017

Introduction

At Lancasterian Primary School, we are dedicated to delivering an exciting and stimulating Topic curriculum. We believe that it should be a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum and should meet the needs of all children. We aim to teach in a more creative way by developing a series of planned cross-curricular, integrated themes based on the children's own interests which will embed learning, encourage independence and enthuse children and staff. By experiencing a wide range of opportunities, we believe that children have the potential to achieve and be the best they can be.

Topic is taught through Keys Stages 1 and 2 and covers the following subjects:

- Art and Design
- Computing
- Design and Technology
- Geography
- History

Although taught as separate subjects, teachers also make clear links between music, PSHE, PE and RE within their chosen Topic. There are also links to English and Numeracy in order to promote high standards in reading, writing and maths.

Moreover, through Topic, each class will also spend time learning about the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Each Topic is also underpinned by four Curriculum Drivers. These include aspiration, inclusion, creativity and resilience and these should support and reinforce all teaching and learning of Topic within the school.

Planning and Teaching

Teachers follow four main principles whilst planning their medium-term Topic plans. They must:

- Make it real for the children, which in turn makes it more likely for the children to engage in what they're learning.
- Let the pupils steer the Topics. The teachers planned lessons should provoke the children to ask their own questions, which in turn will allow the Topics to follow the children's own interests.
- Don't over-plan. The teacher should aim to provoke enquiry and thus this will need space and time to be followed.
- Enough time must be allowed in the weekly timetable to allow Topics to build momentum.

Each year group is required to complete a medium term plan for each topic. Topics usually last for half a term, although some can continue for a whole term. Using the medium-term plans, teachers are also required to complete a weekly plan, providing greater detail including differentiation.

At Lancasterian, we use the 'Chris Quigley Online Planner' to ensure we are covering the demands of the National Curriculum. This is done at the end of each topic using <http://www.cqplanner.co.uk>.

Timetabling

At Lancasterian, we aim to teach Topic for about 3 sessions a week, though this is flexible based on the class timetable each term. Some of these Topic sessions may last a whole afternoon, while others may be shorter.

Recording

Topic work should be recorded in books at least once a week. 'Recording' can be interpreted in many ways, including writing, drawing, rough note-taking, photographs, photocopies of group work, printouts of flipcharts etc.

Topic Launch Day

At the start of each new topic, every year group organises a Topic Launch Day. This day offers an exciting opportunity for the children to experience what they are going to be learning about, and acts as a way to enthuse the children about their forthcoming Topic. This might be a trip, for example to the Natural History Museum; a real life experience, such as food tasting; or it might be an experience through drama, for example creating a role play area in preparation for use throughout the Topic.

The Curriculum Drivers

Curriculum drivers are themes which filter throughout all the children's Topic learning. They help to create a curriculum which addresses the specific needs of our children. The drivers are common throughout Topic work in the whole school, and can also influence literacy and maths. When planning Topic work, the teacher will explicitly design activities to promote the curriculum drivers. The curriculum drivers were decided during the summer of 2016 by the whole teaching staff and are as follows:

- Aspiration
- Inclusion
- Creativity
- Resilience

Assessment

Topic is not formally assessed in the same way as literacy and maths. It is planned to provide continuity and progression. Through Topic, we aim to encourage the best possible progress and the highest attainment for all children.

Differentiation

Topic should be accessible and challenging to children of all abilities within a class, catering for different learning styles. Scaffolding within lessons caters for children who need more support and extension for those who need more challenge. This can come in many different forms, for example,

the use of adult support or mixed ability work with peers supporting each other. There should be some evidence of different learning styles and differentiation/scaffolding in children's books, to be checked during regular book scrutinies.

Links with Parents and Homework

Parents can share learning with their children by getting involved in Topic homework and projects. In Topic, we promote the idea of homework projects. Children should be given at least one piece of homework per Topic, and it is recommended that this should last a series of weeks.

Furthermore, a parents' workshop will run once a year, where parents will be invited into school and offered the opportunity to discuss their views on Topic, and further develop their understanding of what the subject entails.

Trips

We, as a staff, agree that trips can be an enriching experience for Topic learning, and can provide real life experiences to the children. As a result, teachers are encouraged to arrange one Topic trip per half term.

Role of the Topic Coordinator

The role of the Topic Coordinator is:

- To monitor the quality of teaching of Topic through planning checks, book scrutinies and lesson observations.
- To coordinate the teaching of Topic within the school.
- To ensure continuity and progression of the teaching and learning of Topic across the key stages and the school.
- To order and maintain resources, whilst managing the budget.
- To support staff who are less confident with teaching Topic.
- To feed back to the teaching staff from any CPD they undertake.
- To provide where necessary, staff training and development.
- To show, by example, good Topic teaching.

Conclusion

' Children learn better when they are excited and engaged – but what excites and engages them best is truly excellent teaching, which challenges them and shows them what they can do. When there is joy in what they are doing, they learn to love learning.'

(Excellence and Enjoyment: A strategy for primary schools, DfES, 2003)

Through creative, flexible and child-centred Topic work at Lancasterian, we can encourage children to 'love learning' and become independent learners. Topic provides a structure for creative, inclusive teaching and learning, which is at the heart of the ethos of our school.