Curriculum Policy
November 2024

CEO : Ms T A Kneale CBE

Last updated: November 2024

Fern Academy Trust Curriculum Policy

Curriculum Intent:

Across Fern Academy Trust, we are committed to providing a broad and balanced curriculum that equips our children with essential skills, knowledge and understanding in order to promote growth, learning and personal development. Through the teaching of our school values, we intend for our children to become curious, inquisitive and driven learners, who take excitement and pride in their learning achievements and successes.

Questioning is a key focus of our curriculum: our aim is to provide children with the skills required to think more deeply about concepts taught and how they can be applied to unfamiliar contexts. Our aim is to have a rich, varied and engaging curriculum that will develop independent learning skills and resilience, a key skill for our pupils' future. We firmly believe in inclusivity: we intend that all children are able to reach and realise their full potential (socially, emotionally and academically).

Implementation:

Planning:

All subjects are coherently planned and sequenced to build upon prior knowledge and skills for future learning. Subject plans ensure for the revision of previously taught skills and the acquisition of cumulative curriculum knowledge. This carefully sequenced approach is underpinned by the best available, and most current, evidence on how best to support children in retaining and remembering knowledge in the long term. For example, History and Geography are taught on a 2-week rotation so that these subjects are taught more frequently over the course of the academic year. This supports key research of spaced practice in order to strengthen children's learning and recollection of key knowledge and facts. In addition, knowledge organisers and knowledge notes set out the substantive knowledge that children will learn in our foundation subjects, and place focus on key vocabulary and its application.

Within our curriculum, our children learn about significant individuals to inspire and motivate a curiosity, fascination and respect for our world, its cultures and its people. In our teaching, we endeavour to use higher-level questioning (through our deeper-thinking approach) to consolidate learning, deepen understanding, broaden young minds and maximise potential. Deeper-thinking questioning and tasks provide creative learning opportunities for our pupils to articulate reflective responses and develop their critical thinking. These tasks exercise pupils' disciplinary knowledge through using a range of skills (e.g. hypothesising, researching, deducing etc) and encourage them to think like geographers, historians and scientists, for example. In essence, our curriculum is designed to facilitate proactive, thoughtful and reflective learners through these key learning questions and concepts.

Assessment

It is important to track and assess all learners to ensure we are continually meeting the needs of all groups. For Maths and English, we assess throughout the year using a balance of formative and summative assessments (see assessment policy for more detail). Summative assessments are conducted three times a year (in years 2-6) and in Spring and Summer in year 1 using nationally standardised tests. For the Foundation subjects, teachers assess pupils against the learning questions or objectives on a termly basis. Cumulative quizzes and retrieval practice tasks (for example, Flick back fours, remember two things etc) form part of every lesson and are another way that teachers are able to assess learning in some of our foundation subjects. Our assessments across the curriculum support teachers when making judgements on individual progress and attainment, which enables them to set ambitious targets and develop next steps for learning.

Data Analysis/Raising Standards

At each assessment point, data is collated by the Data Management Lead. It is the responsibility for the Data Management lead to collect, collate and report on the data at each assessment point. The Curriculum Director, SLT and subject leaders are responsible for analysing and interpreting results and forming action plans to support improvements. The CEO, Headteachers and governors are given copies of all data to enable analysis of trends and to set clear priorities/targets for the forthcoming academic year. The School Development Plans for each school ensure that curriculum issues are regularly discussed, monitored and reviewed.

Evaluation - Key tasks

During the Autumn term, using school data, Perspectives (Nova))/Analysing School Performance Data:

- We determine how well we are doing and how well we compare with similar schools;
- We analyse trends in our school performance and compare them with national trends;
- We determine whole school targets for English and Mathematics and prioritise areas for subject development generally;
- Staff discuss what needs to be done to further improve our school performance;
- Aspirational targets for improving pupil outcomes (attainment and progress), are built in the appraisal cycles for all staff;
- Throughout the year, targets and priorities are re-visited to record progress and to modify if necessary. In English and Maths, this is linked to our cycle of pupil progress reviews.

Monitoring

The curriculum director and subject leaders monitor across our academy on a termly basis. Subject leaders and their teams are responsible for sharing their subject vision and embedding this within our school culture and ethos. Coordinators provide support, guidance

and coaching related to their subjects for all teaching staff. Alongside the curriculum director, coordinator monitoring consists of learning walks, supportive observations, pupil interviews, planning monitoring and book trawls. Phase leaders also undertake monitoring and support teachers to deliver different areas of the curriculum.

Through our curriculum monitoring, we ensure:

- High expectations of both staff and pupils are consistent across our schools, year groups and subjects
- Consistently high standards of classroom practice are met and maintained
- Assessment is used effectively to plan for next steps in learning
- Appropriate provisions and scaffolds are in place for EAL and SEN pupils and those with disadvantaged backgrounds
- Learning opportunities are interactive, engaging and enriching
- Children are being sufficiently challenged in lessons to further their learning
- Colleagues are supported appropriately through support and CPD opportunities
- Work is tailored to the needs of our learners and adapted to extend and challenge as well as support (see SEND policy and Mastery, Greater Depth and G & T policy).
- Interventions are in place for target individuals and groups to accelerate progress

The Curriculum Director (Emma Blankley) is responsible for assessing the impact and effectiveness of each subject. Each academic year, subject coordinators meet in their subject teams to develop a coordinator plan for their subject. Coordinators review the need for any subject-specific support and identify and create development points where appropriate. Teams ensure resource areas are refreshed, well supplied and organised for teachers to use at their convenience. In addition, all teams plan enrichment events for all of our schools to promote their subject area and create exciting learning experiences and opportunities for all of our pupils. In the past, these events have included whole-school gallery walks and competitions (organised by our Art team) as well as exploring the cultures, food and traditions of Spanish speaking countries (organised by our MFL team). Minutes from all subject team meetings are shared with the curriculum lead. Governors are also given regular updates on curriculum initiatives and are informed of priorities within our curriculum.

Contextual Learning and extra-curricular activities

Within our collaboration, we place real focus on contextual learning and therefore recognise the value of workshops, experience days and excursions. These impactful learning opportunities help drive progress and attainment by complimenting teaching and learning in the classroom. All classes are expected to engage in one trip per term; at least one trip per year is out of county.

In addition, we offer a wide range of after-school or lunchtime clubs delivered by staff and external providers. Clubs can include: Art club, Choir, Fiction Addiction, Sewing club, Cooking, Latin, Yoga and Dance. We ensure we review all clubs on a termly basis in order to meet the needs and preferences of our children.

There are number of ways in which we like to involve parents and carers in their children's learning. Homework is a weekly feature of the Key Stage Two curriculum used to reinforce and extend children's learning (see our homework policy for more details). We regularly invite families to attend curriculum meetings where we share learning strategies and model taught methods (in mathematics for example).

Celebrating Efforts and Achievements:

All children have personal learning targets for reading and multiplication tables, which are reviewed and updated by the class teacher over the course of the year (please refer to the English/Maths policy for further information). Curriculum badges, stars of the week, science stars, handwriting awards and pens, class and individual attendance awards and our rainbow readers awards are some of the ways in which we recognise and celebrate outstanding effort and behaviour (across our curriculum) in our school assemblies. Class teachers are actively encouraged to display examples of exceptional work in the classrooms to further promote positivity and praise.

Impact:

Children will leave our Academy Trust as driven, resilient learners who are fully equipped and prepared for the secondary curriculum. Our pupils will be adaptive learners, who are not afraid to take academic risks and they will respond positively and confidently to challenge. Children from Fern Academy will leave us with transferrable skills that they are able to apply effectively when faced with new or unfamiliar concepts. They will work collaboratively and positively with their peers and maintain appreciation, tolerance and the upmost respect for others from different backgrounds, faiths and communities. Finally, our pupils will leave us as self-aware, passionate learners, who recognise their individual skills and talents, and they will confidently seize opportunities to further their future endeavours, passions and dreams.