

Curriculum Principles

Before we talk about Coppice curriculum principles, it is important to have clarity over what we mean by 'curriculum'.

- The curriculum is 'what' we teach. This is not a specific 'what' – e.g. it is not necessarily mandated/prescribed by the trust. However, it is the content that is intended to be taught.
- The curriculum is also 'when' we teach the 'what'. This will become clearer through the principles, but 'what' we teach can be impacted by 'when' we teach it.
- The curriculum refers to the whole journey of the subject – from EYFS, through KS1 until the end of KS2. It stretches beyond the class, year group and phase.

It also needs to be mentioned that when we talk about Coppice curriculum principles, we are not referring to specific curriculums/schemes of works but any curriculum/scheme of work, whether that be bought in or written (either in house or externally).

The cake analogy

Analogies can help with understanding. Through unpicking the curriculum principles we believe in, the analogy of the making and baking of a cake supports this understanding.

- All cakes need ingredients
- Cakes are more successful when recipes are followed
- Even when we use the same ingredients and follow the same recipe, we can end up with cakes that look and taste different
- Sometimes, new cakes can come about from trying new things
- The more we know about how cakes are made, the better we are at making cakes

Principle 1 – The curriculum should be coherent and sequenced

The words around coherent and sequenced have been used heavily in Ofsted documentation. However, this has not influenced this curriculum principle. At Coppice, we believe that a coherently sequenced curriculum leads to a better curriculum.

When we use the words 'coherently sequenced', we mean 'why this', 'why here', 'why now'. Each unit of work is placed for a reason with a rationale.

Let's return to the cake analogy – when we talk about coherent sequencing of units, we are talking about the ingredients of the cake.

- All cakes need ingredients
 - All of the units of the work contribute to the learning journey for the children. They have a purpose and reason for being there and add value

- Some ingredients need to be added in a specific order.
 - This is the same as some units of work. Some units naturally have to come before or after other units – for example, we would not attempt to teach multiplication (repeated addition) before we taught addition.
- Some ingredients do not have to be added in a specific order – you could add the flour or sugar first as long as these are combined before adding the egg.
 - This is also the same as some units of work. Some units have more flexibility about when they are taught, so long as they are broadly taught before or after other units – for example, in science, there could be flexibility over the order of units within a year group, but it would not be possible to teach about reversible and irreversible changes before teaching states of matter/
- If you remove ingredients from the cake, it may not work
 - With the coherent sequencing of curriculum units, if you take one away, it will have a (likely negative) impact on the whole journey. Without a unit, the learning that is contained within that unit is lost and is likely to have repercussions on future learning.
- If you add in or replace ingredients from the cake, the final cake is likely to change
 - As above, if you add in or replace a unit of work, there will be an impact on the final outcome of the overall curriculum journey. It may be possible for this to be a positive impact – for example, after evaluation, a unit on Mayans was replaced for a unit on Egypt as it would offer better learning outcomes without negatively affecting the overall coherent sequence.
- Even with the same set of ingredients, the journey and final cake may differ
 - The units will all be taught differently (and so they should!) in each school. The broad outcomes – what we want the children to know and be able to do but the end of the unit – should be similar but the journey to achieving them and the way that they show them may be different (you may have many small Victoria Sponges rather than one big one, but it should taste similar!)

Principle 2 – The curriculum should be cumulative

The knowledge, skills and understanding in the curriculum should build cumulatively. We know that learning knowledge and skills follows the Matthew Effect – the more you have, the more you can get. It is important that both knowledge and skills develop throughout a curriculum to allow schemas to be built effectively.

The cumulative nature of the curriculum is not just limited to knowledge of facts. Yes, knowledge is important and plays a very important part in the application of a curriculum. However, to be able to apply this knowledge with accuracy, it is important that the skills build cumulatively

alongside this. This may be referred to as knowledge and skill, but may also be referred to as substantive knowledge – I know that – and disciplinary knowledge – I know how.

Through the cumulative building of the curriculum, the nature of the content should start with more concrete examples that the children can relate to and understand, and build towards more abstract ones. The move from concrete through to abstract needs to be managed carefully to ensure children have the 'building blocks' before they move on. The use of key themes are beneficial here as it allows the growth of knowledge and skill through something familiar.

Principle 3 – The curriculum should be built around effective pedagogy

We know from Dylan William that 'A great intended curriculum badly taught is likely to be a much worse experience than a bad intended curriculum well taught. Pedagogy trumps curriculum. The 'enacted' curriculum is the lived daily experience of young people. Therefore, you could say that **curriculum IS pedagogy**'

At Coppice, we would not prescribe a set list of pedagogies which we would expect to see, and pedagogy is certainly not a checklist. There are a range of pedagogical practices which evidence suggests have a strong impact on learning. More information about these can be found in Coppice Pedagogy Principles.

This principle highlights the importance of teaching the curriculum.

The curriculum is the ingredients of the cake. If the ingredients can't be mixed and baked well, then the cake won't be as successful. In the same way, if the curriculum isn't enacted well with effective pedagogies, then the impact of the curriculum will be less effective.

Principle 4 – The curriculum builds connections

By coherently sequencing the curriculum and building it cumulatively, the curriculum will build connections with both prior and future learning. These connections support learning in the long term and support in the building of schema.

The curriculum should also look to build relevant connections with other subject areas where appropriate. Some connections are clear and support learning – for example, using the science learning from a unit on electricity to support the DT learning on a unit that includes an electrical circuit. These should be carefully considered so that they follow the first two principles. Links should not be made tenuously – for example studying The Black Death because you are studying a theme of colour in art.

The curriculum should also build connections with the children's wider development and their understanding of the world. The connections should help them to gain a better understanding of who they are and how they and others fit into the world around them. It should act as both a mirror and a window – reflecting themselves but also giving them a view beyond what they know.

Principle 5 – The curriculum should be meaningful and purposeful

The curriculum needs to hold meaning and purpose for the children (note that this is also reliant on the effective pedagogies). By being meaningful and purposeful, we mean that the children need to develop an understanding of the things that have helped shape the way that things are. If the curriculum only focused on the ingredients and nothing else, then the children would not understand how they fit together into the wider scope of curriculum development.

The 'ingredients' that have been placed should have meaning and purpose in and of themselves. It is important that the children understand why they are learning about certain things – it is by doing this that the learning can be given more meaning and purpose.

It is also important that the children can see themselves in the work that they are doing. This means that the children should have opportunities to be part of the curriculum – on the inside – which would enhance their understanding of it. This is not about 'doing' the curriculum as Mary Myatt describes, but choosing activities or tasks which improve the teaching and learning of the curriculum through giving it meaning and purpose.

Principle 6 – The curriculum should be relevant, diverse and reflect Britain and the wider world

We live in increasingly diverse times and it is important that the curriculum gives children the broad range of knowledge and understanding to be able to engage appropriately in the world around them. As is referenced in principle 4, the children need to see beyond what they know.

The curriculum needs to address and close the gaps between the world that the children see and are exposed to and the wider world they will be going in to. This means that the curriculum should reflect different genders, races, ethnicities, backgrounds and beliefs.

Principle 7 – The curriculum should be well led and supported

If the units of the curriculum are the ingredients, then the support for the curriculum is the recipe. If we think of the technical challenge in the Bake Off, we know that the outcomes are more successful when there is an understanding of the end product. We also know that bakers tend to be better on bakes where they have a full recipe!

Curriculums can be supported in a range of ways. It could be that resources to support the units of work are provided as a guide/framework to work from. It could be that the subject leader in the

school works with teachers on developing their understanding of the curriculum. It could be that the trust wide collaboration opportunities, such as subject network meetings or communications via Teams, provide guidance on the curriculum.

A key consideration is that the support should be equitable for all. With so many ingredients to think about, a new teacher (whether that be to the profession or new to year group) could be overwhelmed if they have never seen or heard of the ingredients before. The support for a curriculum area should help all teachers to deliver the content to a similar standard – we want all of our children to have equitable experiences of the curriculum.

Principle 8 – The curriculum should value the discipline of every subject equally

It is important that the children leave Coppice being functionally numerate and literate. However, it is also important that they have been able to experience the range of subjects on offer so that they have had the chance to show their talents in other areas. We are working towards having curriculums in every subject that provide the ingredients needed for children to shine.

As part of achieving this, it is important that each subject is valued for its own discipline. When studying a subject, we need to respect the subject for the role it plays. It is also important for children to know the subject that they are studying so that they can be supported to achieve and find their potential in that subject.

Principle 9 – The curriculum should value each child equally taking account of their background

Each child is different and comes with a variety of different backgrounds and experiences. This affects and has an impact on the way that they approach the curriculum. The curriculum needs to make sure that it enables all children to access and be successful in what they are doing. It should be varied enough that it addresses issues that the children may encounter, and should be adapted sufficiently so that all children are able to engage in their learning.