



Avonwood Primary School

The best in everyone™

Part of United Learning

Curriculum Policy

Date Reviewed	Reviewed by	Date agreed by Governors	Date ratified by Directors (if applicable)	To be reviewed
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To be ratified

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What is the Curriculum at Avonwood Primary School?

Introduction

Several elements make up both the intent and implementation of the curriculum at Avonwood. Though aspects of the content are often refined and developed, the heart and values that underpin our curriculum are a set of constant themes or golden threads that run from EYFS to Year 6.

There are six aspects to the curriculum that are interrelated and integral to our curriculum and curriculum thinking. These are:

- **Our Earth Charter Status**
- **Reading at the heart of all we do**
- **High Expectations**
- **Powerful Knowledge**
- **Inspiring wonder and intellectual curiosity**
- **Achieving our best despite background or starting point**

We encapsulate the vision of our curriculum on our website in the Head Teachers vision statement and in the graphic below (figure 1):

*At Avonwood we see it as our moral imperative for all children, regardless of background, to achieve their very best. Our children all read classic literature, study modern foreign languages, experience the science of dissecting organs and even learn a new musical instrument every year as a right, not a privilege. These high expectations enable us to develop and deliver a curriculum rich in carefully sequenced and embedded powerful knowledge. We expect teachers to deliver lessons with that fulfil this expectation whilst living up to our ambition of **inspiring wonder and intellectual curiosity**.*

Our curriculum is at the centre of every education decision we take at Avonwood. We do not see the curriculum as a finished product, far from it. On a weekly, termly and annual basis we review plans, consider our intent and make sure we deliver the very best academic and enrichment diet to our children. All curriculum areas have a subject lead that is responsible for the design, implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of this area.

Avonwood has moved away from tokenistic topics towards knowledge rich experiences in discrete subjects, with deliberate cross curricular links only when appropriate. For example, in Year 2 we teach the Great Fire of London when children have already learnt in Geography where London is and its status within the United Kingdom. The awe and wonder of learning continues to characterise the Avonwood curriculum but in a purposeful, sequenced and deliberate manner.

If 'powerful knowledge' is the head of our school, then reading for pleasure and progress is its heart. Our school environment and curriculum crystallises reading for pleasure as a valued and purposeful part of our curriculum. We agree with the view of Thompson (2020) when she states the importance of becoming a reader who teachers and a teacher who reads is a pedagogy with far reaching consequences. Reading progression is carefully mapped to provide opportunities for exposure to a wide variety of genres, authors of

different backgrounds and a mixture of classic and contemporary texts. Every afternoon we 'Drop Everything and Read' to end our school day with a high quality whole class reading session. We wholeheartedly believe reading is the golden key to unlocking the potential of every child's success.

We are honoured to be the only United Nations Earth Charter Primary School in Europe. We believe it is vital that all children have an understanding of their responsibility as global citizens and our eight Earth Charter principals are referenced throughout our curriculum and daily life. From the importance of peace and respect for all living creatures through to the consideration of the past and future of our planet, this ethos gives our Avonwood curriculum a very current and relevant perspective that all stakeholders within our community hold strong. This runs deep within our "Avonwood DNA" and is optimised by our school mantra... it starts with one!

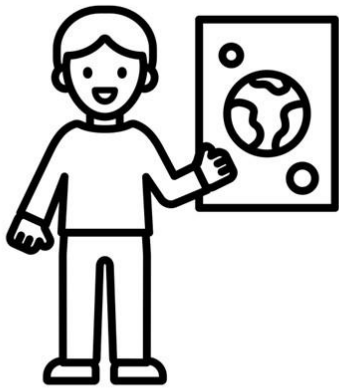
Avonwood is an exceptionally positive, happy and inspiring place to learn. Children are excited to come to school to discover the rich learning experiences teachers have planned each and every day. It is this nurtured thirst for learning that has been carefully engineered through the awe and wonder of our curriculum that we feel makes Avonwood such a unique, academically rich and special place to grow and learn

[Source: Avonwood Primary School Curriculum Page December 2019 Accessed June 2020
<https://www.avonwoodprimaryschool.org.uk/curriculum/curriculum-introduction>]

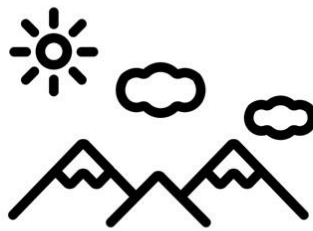
Visual representation of the Avonwood Curriculum

 **Avonwood Primary School**
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The Avonwood Curriculum



Earth Charter Values



High Expectations



Achieving our Best



Powerful Knowledge



Inspiring Wonder & Intellectual Curiosity



Reading at the Heart

Our Earth Charter Status and Values

The Earth Charter roots pupils in their community, their school, and the world. It helps them consider what is to come, what has gone before, how they are connected to each other and how they can each make a difference. The eight earth charter values (see below) live within the school as a shared vocabulary across the community. Teachers integrate these into their planning and teaching, revisiting each value throughout the year. In doing so they strengthen and deepen children's understanding of each of their values and their application to their lives and the world they live in.

As a school we very much believe that the Earth Charter values are timely and pertinent to our changing world and diverse global society. They give us a framework to educate our children in the academic subjects and as part of their character education.

The Earth Charter is an ethical foundation for actions to build a more just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It articulates a mindset of global interdependence and shared responsibility. It offers a vision of hope and a call to action.

[Source: Earth Charter. Org About Us Accessed June 2020 <https://earthcharter.org/about-us/>]

Implication and Expectation

- Teachers need to continue to build the values/ concepts into their planning at long, mid, and short-term levels. They need to be visible and evidenced in planning and lessons. They should not be viewed as a bolt on.
- The values are displayed in classrooms as an aide memoir to help teachers include these within day to day dialogue and as part of lessons.
- Subjects such as Humanities, PSHE, and Science naturally lend themselves to incidental and integrated coverage of the eight values. They also fit naturally within the wider curriculum of class and whole school assemblies and discussions with pupils about behaviour and conduct.

The Eight Earth Charter and Earth Charter Values

See <https://www.avonwoodprimaryschool.org.uk/about-us/earth-charter>

Principle 1 – Life



The Principle of Life means respecting and caring for all living things, no matter how big or how small. All life is important, not just human life. We will treat all living things with respect and consideration.

"I promise to respect and care for all living things, no matter how big or how small"

Principle 2 – Interconnected



The Interconnected Principle means that everything is connected to everything else. Each and every person and living creature has its own special qualities. We all have a place on this Earth and we all need each other.

"I promise to respect and understand that everything on earth is interconnected and is somehow connected to me"

Principle 3 – Family



The Principle of Family means doing everything that you can to make sure everyone in the human family is well treated. It means that you will work with others to make sure that all boys and girls have a home, clean water to drink, food to eat, a school to go to and a doctor to look after them if they are sick.

"I promise to respect and understand that I am part of the whole human family and I will do all I can to make sure that everyone in the human family is well treated"

Principle 4 – Past



The Principle of the Past means that you will learn from all the different people who have lived before you, discovering what made their lives good and what made their lives difficult and you will be inspired by their gifts of wisdom.

"I promise to respect and understand the past and to learn from all the different people who have lived before me."

Principle 5 – Earth



The Principle of the Earth means that you promise to take care of this Earth, the water, the air, the soil and all living things and you will do everything in your power to live in a way that is not wasteful or greedy. The earth is the home we share.

"I promise to respect and care for the earth, the home we all share. I will do all that I can to protect the water, the air, the soil and all living things"

Principle 6 – Peace



The Principle of Peace means that you promise to live in peace and to cooperate with others to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way. If you do have a conflict, you must seek solutions that are fair to everyone.

"I promise to do everything I can to live in peace and to cooperate with others to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way that is fair to everyone"

Principle 7 – Love



The Principle of Love means that you promise to be truthful and kind to others, to build trust amongst those that know you and to understand the ways of each person that you meet. It means that you will take responsibility for your actions in all things.

"I promise to be kind and truthful to others to understand the feelings of others, and do all I am able to make the world a more loving place"

Principle 8 – Future



The Principle of the Future means that you will do everything possible in your lifetime to make sure that everyone now and in the future can live together in health, peace and harmony.

"I promise to do everything possible in my lifetime to help make our earth a healthy, harmonious and peaceful home for everyone in the future"

Reading at the heart of all we do

“So, it is with children who learn to read fluently and well: They begin to take flight into whole new worlds as effortlessly as young birds take to the sky.” – William James

We believe that reading is a key to all academic disciplines as well as being a wonderful escape and entertainment for children. With books children learn about their own world and the worlds of others. Through reading children extend their vocabulary and begin to think like a writer which in turn aids their writing.

Pisa research and a host of other papers point strongly towards the link between reading for pleasure and reading success. In Pisa 2009 we find:

Students who reported reading fiction and who may also have reported reading other material, except for comic books, were the students who achieved the highest scores in the reading scale: on average, over 100 points more than students who read nothing

[PISA 2009 see <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/48852630.pdf>]

Furthermore, out of the 30+ strands of the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit, the teaching of reading comprehension strategies amounts to one of the strongest. This strategy can amount over 6 months of progress. [EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit see <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/reading-comprehension-strategies/>]

More recently the lockdown of 2020 due to the Covid pandemic has seen girls reading overtake boys according to a National Literacy Trust survey:

The reading enjoyment gap between boys and girls has increased five-fold – from just over a two-percentage point difference at the start of 2020 to an 11.5 percentage point difference during lockdown.

Three in five girls (60.2%) said they enjoyed reading during lockdown, compared with 48.9% before, while only 48.7% of boys said they enjoyed reading amid the pandemic, compared with 46.6% pre-lockdown.

More girls than boys said they read daily in their free time before the lockdown, and this trend has continued, with the gap between boys and girls in terms of their daily reading widening in the past months.

[As reported in the Guardian July 2020 see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/13/gender-gap-in-childrens-reading-grew-in-uk-lockdown-survey>]

Implication and Expectation

Children at Avonwood have “reading instruction” as part of their daily curriculum. In these lessons, children are taught each of the reading domains and taught to do more than decode books.

- Each day in our classes ends with a DEAR or Drop Everything and Read session. During these time teachers model reading for pleasure to children and use either the current class text or a book of similar quality.
- Each half term Year groups select a demanding and high-quality text to be used for reading instruction. This book is also used to inform the writing projects that children undertake and as a means of broadening their vocabulary.
- Where possible the book chosen will link to an overall curriculum theme, for example World War 2, however this is not essential and tenuous links for links sake should be avoided.
- Books are chosen based on some or all of the following principles:
 - They are recommended or listed by CLPE (The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education)
 - The text can be said to form part of the UK canon of classic literature, for example Alice in Wonderland or Oliver Twist
 - The text is drawn from a culture beyond their own and as a result widens children world and their experience of diversity
 - They are chosen to reflect a gender balance of authors across the canon of books studied in school.



High Expectations

Aside from the setting of work, high expectations also relate to the routines and classroom practices we have in place. Tom Bennet reminds us that whatever we permit we promote and therefore for children to produce their best in effort and presentation we need to put in place routines and make explicit our expectations for this to happen. This is what Doug Lemov talks about in Teach like a Champion when he talks about “engineering efficiency”. This means being clear about how we distribute resources, the setting out of pages of work and how questions are answered in dialogic inquiries, quizzing and question and answer sessions.

Implication and Expectation

- Part of our wider curriculum is modelling to children how we want them to set out their work, answer questions fully and what acceptable length and quality of work would look like.
- High expectations also come into our reading curriculum in that we expect children to read a challenging, diverse and demanding canon of texts before they leave Avonwood. These can be viewed on our website ~

Powerful Knowledge

The National curriculum was created to enable children to learn the best that has been thought and said. At the heart of the 2014 curriculum is an emphasis on Powerful Knowledge. The drive and meaning behind this term is sometimes conflated with a pedagogy that is just about facts and factual knowledge. However the term has its roots in the work of Michael Young, a social reformer who very much sees Powerful Knowledge as a means for children to move beyond their own worlds and access society and knowledge that would otherwise be closed to them.

The pursuit of Powerful Knowledge replaces and transcends a curriculum that is just about completing activities or a curriculum that is overly focussed on making tenuous links between subjects.

Rosalind Walker describes Powerful Knowledge as follows:

Powerful knowledge is knowledge that opens things up to students: opportunities, further knowledge, and transcendence of every day. Powerful Knowledge is typically abstract or rarefied and will not be picked up by students from their everyday life. It requires expert teaching. It's ambitious, empowering, and beautiful.

[Rosalind Walker. Wordpress.com

<https://rosalindwalker.wordpress.com/2019/10/18/powerful-knowledge-what-it-is-why-its-important-and-how-to-make-it-happen-in-your-school/>]

Powerful knowledge requires teachers to have a good and growing understanding of the subjects they are teaching or at the very least the substantive and disciplinary knowledge they will be teaching in their year group. Such deeper knowledge on the part of the teacher results in deeper learning and understanding on the part of the pupils

Implication and Expectation

- Teachers and subject leaders are part of subject associations such as the historical association and the Jurassic Maths Hub. These organisations help to guide thinking around curriculum design and help to deepen teacher subject knowledge of Powerful Knowledge in the subjects they teach
- Subject leaders work with year teams and United Learning advisory teams to create plans and knowledge organisers / documents that outline key facts, dates, maps, diagrams, and vocabulary related to an area of study
- Time is built into the curriculum to help and allow children to memorise key knowledge and to use this knowledge in compositions, written pieces etc

Achieving our best despite background or starting point

High achieving schools and systems use a Confucian assumption: every child is capable of learning anything, depending on the way it is presented to them and the effort they put into learning it

[Professor Tim Oates on the removal of National curriculum Levels – Cambridge Assessment talk on Youtube - <https://youtu.be/-q5vrBXFpm0>]

We believe that labels and ability grouping can be limiting for children and can lead to ceilings being placed on children by themselves or even by teachers. Differentiation, though well intentioned, has in the past led to such limiting. Susan Hart first touched on what has been called the “sorry tail” of differentiation in 1998. It has more recently been outlined in *Creating Learning Without Limits* [Swan et al 2012]. Here Alison Peacock and her colleagues discuss the importance of refusing to see children’s future learning as predictable or inevitable and they describe the liberating practice of choice and challenge, a strategy developed at the Wroxham school.

David Didau reminds us that we are prone to assumptions and bias about children based on background and our perceptions of their ability. He issues this warning based on his reading of several research papers:

In some cases, though, particularly when students are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, teachers do seem too often expect less of students than they can achieve. If we signal, intentionally or otherwise that ‘kids like these’ are capable of less than they may well begin to perform in ways that conform to our confirmed expectations.

[David Didau – *The Learning Spy Blog* <https://learningspy.co.uk/psychology/20-psychological-principles-for-teachers-11-expectations/> June 13th 2015]

Clearly with a strap line of the Best in Everyone, our school culture and mind set needs to operate against any conscious or unconscious bias towards children based on background or socio-economic standing.

It is also worth highlighting that setting or streaming children across a year group based on results has limited *impact according to* the EEF. If children are given differing work to try and attempt to match their ability in sets across a year group then EEF tell us:

Overall the effects are small, and it appears that setting or streaming is not an effective way to raise attainment for most pupils.

[*EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit* - <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/setting-or-streaming/>]

Implication and Expectation

- Children are provided with choice of activities in some tasks such as in Maths Mastery work or a more open-ended graduated list of “steps to success” in writing

and some creative tasks. Crucially children are not given colour or ability group worksheets or activities based on predetermined ideas of ability.

- We do not make use of ability tables, groups and place ceilings on what children can do
- Children use concrete and pictorial methods within mathematics as part of a mastery approach and as a strategy for all pupils, not just those that are deemed underachieving or in a need of a manipulatives to aid learning.
- Whole class reading includes all children, though it will be appropriate for some learners to pre or post read chapters to enable deeper understanding or help aid cognitive load when looking at areas of comprehension

To be ratified

Inspiring wonder and intellectual curiosity

"Much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity an intuition turned out to be priceless later on." Steve Jobs

The tag line of Avonwood on "inspiring wonder and intellectual curiosity" is a touchstone of the school philosophy that has endured from the inception of the school. Teachers actively look for opportunities to cultivate curiosity amongst the learners. It is part of the school DNA and can be seen in the explanations and questioning during lessons and in the inclusion of hook or starter experiences at the start of topics or terms of learning. But what is curiosity or inspired wonder? Jon Hutchinson recently described curiosity in the TES as follows:

Curiosity is truly something to be treasured and pursued in our classrooms. But there are different kinds of curiosity. There is the fleeting, distracting, quick-rush of being fascinated by something, like a sparkler on bonfire night. This is bright, intense, but quickly extinguished. Then, there is the much deeper, ongoing interest in a topic, which burns slowly and burns for a long time. We might call these "diversive" and "epistemic" curiosity.

Both have their place, and we should consider how we can foster each as we are planning how and what we teach through our subjects.

[Jon Hutchinson 7 essential lessons from research for subject leaders TES 3rd July 2020
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/article/7-essential-lessons-research-subject-leaders>]

Implication and Expectation

- Divisive or quick rush or novel curiosity should be part of a broader sequence of lessons. Experiences such as visits from Crazy creatures can really help children in their understanding of Variation and Classification
- Hooks or other one off novel experiences could also form a stimulus to a piece of writing such as a newspaper report about an alien visit, however care needs to be taken that such experiences do not usurp the learning and that the outcome of high quality writing or scientific understanding is kept in mind when planning the event. The driver for the inclusion of such events should be subject knowledge first rather than tenuous curriculum links or educational edutainment for children.

The Architecture of the Curriculum

1. Curriculum leaders are responsible for creating a whole school overview documents that outlines the substantive and disciplinary knowledge in subjects from EYFS and Year 6. They also help craft a whole school intent statement for their subject based on the values in this document and staff views.

These documents should make explicit the learning that has gone before and the learning that is to come. Learning sequences should be set within a wider sequence of generative learning, where concepts build on what has gone before. The history curriculum demonstrates this very clearly as shown below in the extract from the school website:

The key coherent and chronological knowledge of the history of Britain and the wider world is taught through the framework of three vertical concepts. These vertical concepts provide lens through which to study and contextualise history, as well as a gradual, deep understanding of complex, more abstract ideas:

- 'Quest for knowledge' - How do people understand the world around them? What is believed; what is known; and what scientific and technological advances are made at the time? Why do people seek to rationalise?

- 'Power, empire and democracy' - Who holds power, and what does this mean for individuals at different levels of society? How is this power legitimised? How are people's rights different in different political contexts?

- 'Community and family' – What is life like for people in different societies? How are these and in different places?

Vertical concepts are revisited throughout our history projects, providing a consistent context that allows pupils to situate new knowledge in their wider historical understanding and revisit key themes throughout our history to help them better understand the world in which they live.

[Avonwood School Website History Curriculum -

<https://www.avonwoodprimaryschool.org.uk/curriculum/subjects/history>]

2 Year teams map out how each of the national curriculum areas will be taught over a year. Where possible links are made between subjects along with opportunities identified to weave in both Earth charter Values and starter / hook activities

3 Year Teams along with the English lead work together to review quality texts for each half term using the criteria above.

4. Subject leaders support year teams in their medium term planning for each subject and in the creation of Knowledge Organisers