

The Curriculum at West Chilton School

There are many definitions of the word curriculum. In our school we describe it in the following terms:

- a planned and structured experience which encompasses a progressive body of knowledge and skills;
- the sum of experiences which contribute to the personal, academic and creative growth of children;
- an experience which evolves and responds in the hands of reflective teachers and active learners.

To be really meaningful, definitions like these need to be thoroughly understood and evident in all aspects of school life. The curriculum is not bound by what can be captured on a piece of paper or experienced in a classroom. It is the sum of all the possibilities for learning that are planned or which arise in a child's life.

A child's work will tell the story of their learning and the teachers thinking. Take one piece of work and it will provide a snap shot of the knowledge and skills that children are acquiring at that moment in time. The quality of that work will reflect the skill of the teacher and the interest, commitment and proficiency of the child.

Well-conceived and enacted, a really good curriculum will result in happy and involved people and learning outcomes of a high standard. In reviewing our offer, we have considered the very best work which children have produced in each class. Reflecting on this, we have discussed and deliberated on the factors that made it so successful. These include:

- allowing children sufficient time to complete tasks to a high standard and to their satisfaction;
- an element of choice and control- particularly over learning outcomes but also at times through pursuing ideas and themes which emerged from other learning;
- the engagement of families and the wider community in classroom experiences;
- embedding of personal and social skills within the curriculum- for example through the writing of poetry;
- first hand experiences;
- making the most of opportunities for teachers to share their own passions and expertise;
- responding to unexpected events and tuning learning to support children developmentally/emotionally;
- developing the children's emotional intelligence;
- where appropriate providing children with a vocabulary/script to manage their emotional responses;
- embedding a layer of social/moral education across the curriculum- this year focusing on gender equality.

Based on these principles are assembling a series of case studies that illustrate their enactment. The result is a more explicit understanding of the ways in which effective curriculum functions here and a shared guide to the continuing evolution and dynamism of that offer.