

Overview: Block 4, Half Term 4

The importance of subject and curriculum knowledge

Time commitment:

- 4 hours of self-study materials
- 6 hours of mentor sessions
- 3 hours of training sessions

Why this, why now?

In recent years, there has been an increasing appreciation that a teacher's subject knowledge is critical. There is acceptance in the literature that secure subject knowledge is a defining characteristic of effective teaching. Block 4 has been designed with this in mind and seeks to support you with practical strategies to develop your subject and curriculum knowledge. It builds on everything you have learned so far about classroom practice, how pupils learn and adaptive teaching. Secure subject knowledge will help you motivate your pupils and teach more effectively because you will be able to:

- Better sequence learning
- Anticipate and overcome common misconceptions
- Teach explicitly
- Build a repertoire of strong examples
- Support pupils transfer knowledge and skills more easily.

This Block will also support you to develop your understanding of the importance of literacy and build a collection of teaching skills related to it. Every teacher must take responsibility for improving pupils' literacy skills in their subject area.

Your workload

The school workload reduction toolkit section on curriculum planning states that curriculum planning is critical and underpins effective teaching, however it acknowledges that it must be productive and sustainable for teachers. There are five principles set out in that document, three of which are particularly relevant to your locus of control:

1. Planning a sequence of lessons is more important than writing individual lesson plans.
2. Planning should take place in purposeful and well-defined blocks of time.
3. Effective planning makes use of high-quality resources.

This Block will support you to manage your workload by encouraging you to utilise the experience of other colleagues and existing resources. It will support you to focus your efforts on activities that will maximise impact over time, such as developing high quality models.

Learn that	Self-directed study materials	Mentor sessions	Training outlines
3.1 A school's curriculum enables it to set out its vision for the knowledge, skills and values that its pupils will learn, encompassing the national curriculum within a coherent wider vision for successful learning	x	x	
3.2 Secure subject knowledge helps teachers to motivate pupils and teach effectively	x	x	
3.3 Ensuring pupils master foundational concepts and knowledge before moving on is likely to build pupils' confidence and help them succeed	x	x	
3.4 Anticipating common misconceptions within particular subjects is also an important aspect of curricular knowledge; working closely with colleagues to develop an understanding of likely misconceptions is valuable	x	x	
3.5 Explicitly teaching pupils the knowledge and skills they need to succeed within particular subject areas is beneficial	x	x	
3.6 In order for pupils to think critically, they must have a secure understanding of knowledge within the subject area they are being asked to think critically about	x		
3.7 In all subject areas, pupils learn new ideas by linking those ideas to existing knowledge, organising this knowledge into increasingly complex mental models (or 'schemata'); carefully sequencing teaching to facilitate this process is important	x	x	

3.8 Pupils are likely to struggle to transfer what has been learnt in one discipline to a new or unfamiliar context	x		
3.9 To access the curriculum, early literacy provides fundamental knowledge; reading comprises two elements: word reading and language comprehension; systematic synthetic phonics is the most effective approach for teaching pupils to decode	x		
3.10 Every teacher can improve pupils' literacy, including by explicitly teaching reading, writing and oral language skills specific to individual disciplines	x		x

Learn how to	Self-directed study materials	Mentor sessions	Training outlines
Build on pupils' prior knowledge, by:			
2d. Identifying possible misconceptions and planning how to prevent these forming		x	
2e. Linking what pupils already know to what is being taught (e.g. explaining how new content builds on what is already known)		x	
2f. Sequencing lessons so that pupils secure foundational knowledge before encountering more complex content		x	
2g. Encouraging pupils to share emerging understanding and points of confusion so that misconceptions can be addressed		x	
Deliver a carefully sequenced and coherent curriculum, by:			
3a Identifying essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles of the subject and providing opportunity for all pupils to learn and master these critical components		x	
3b Ensuring pupils' thinking is focused on key ideas within the subject		x	
3c Working with experienced colleagues to accumulate and refine a collection of powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations	x	x	
3d Using resources and materials aligned with the school curriculum (e.g. textbooks or shared resources designed by experienced colleagues that carefully sequence content)	x	x	
3e Being aware of common misconceptions and discussing with experienced colleagues how to help pupils master important concepts	x	x	

Support pupils to build increasingly complex mental models, by:			
3f. Discussing curriculum design with experienced colleagues and balancing exposition, repetition, practice of critical skills and knowledge.	x		
Develop pupils' literacy, by:			
3m Demonstrating a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics, particularly if teaching early reading and spelling	x		
3n Supporting younger pupils to become fluent readers and to write fluently and legibly	x		
3o Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught			x
3p Modelling reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions, and summarising when reading			x
3q Promoting reading for pleasure (e.g. by using a range of whole class reading approaches and regularly reading high-quality texts to children)			x
3r Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant technical vocabulary)			x
3s Teaching different forms of writing by modelling, planning, drafting and editing			x