

Key Stage 3: good practice case studies

During our survey of the Key Stage 3 curriculum in schools, we saw examples of practice that schools indicated were having a positive impact on their pupils. With their permission, we have exemplified some strands of their work. Areas include cross-phase partnerships, transition, curriculum design, assessment, development of literacy and life skills, and careers education, information, advice and guidance. You can also read our report 'Key Stage 3: the wasted years?' here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-3-the-wasted-years

Contents

1. Egglecliffe School, Stockton-on-Tees | 2
2. Batley Girls' High School Visual Arts College, West Yorkshire | 4
3. Ansford Academy, Somerset | 6
4. The Deepings School, Lincolnshire | 8
5. Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council | 10
- 6: Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy, Lancaster | 12
7. Queensbridge School, Birmingham | 14
- 8: Bristol Metropolitan Academy, Bristol | 16



1. Eggescliffe School, Stockton-on-Tees

[Eggescliffe School](#) is an 11–18 secondary school. The proportion of disadvantaged students and those who come from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.

This case study shows what can be gained when senior leaders in a secondary school form genuine relationships, based on mutual respect, with their counterparts in their partner primaries.

Senior leaders from the linked schools work together to ensure that all students have a seamless transition into Key Stage 3. This enables the young people to build on their previous learning and make the best possible start to their secondary education.

The good practice in more detail

The headteacher explains his emphasis on Key Stage 3: 'If you get Year 6 to Year 10 right, then Year 11 looks after itself. It's about removing the sticking plaster approach to Year 11.'

The headteacher set up a transition group with the seven main partner primary schools, with the aim of creating a continuous learning pathway from Year 6 onwards. Underpinning the success of the group is the professional trust that exists between the senior leaders of the respective phases.

The group began by gaining the views of primary headteachers as to what they felt would make transition more effective for learners. A range of ongoing cross-phase work now takes place.

- Mathematics – every week, the head of department from the secondary school goes to one of the primary schools to teach Level 6 pupils. The group is made up of pupils from all the main partners. The benefits in terms of transition are summed up when he says: 'This is my top set next year.' The head of department also goes into primary lessons to find out what students are learning at Key Stage 2. This helps him to reflect and feed forward when planning for the new curriculum.
- English – two members of the secondary English department go into primary lessons to find out what pupils are learning. High-level pupil readers from the secondary school go into primary classes to help with reading. This paired reading work is credited as part of the secondary pupils' citizenship module. The secondary head of department has planned the English schemes of work for content and skills cross-phase from Year 4. Key Stage 3 schemes of work are now informed by what is happening at Key Stage 2, in order to accelerate progress in Year 7. A colleague within the department has responsibility for Years 6, 7 and 8. This reflects the school's philosophy that the secondary learning journey starts in Year 6. The Year 6 teachers' Key Stage 2 standardisation meeting takes place in the secondary

school to enable colleagues in the next phase to be involved.

- Science – there is a programme of classroom experience visits, using science facilities for pupils from Years 3 to 6.
- Transition portfolio – pupils, parents and Year 6 teachers contribute to this document. It contains examples of work from all subjects and not just 'best' work. This comes into secondary school before the summer holidays so information can be copied and disseminated to form tutors, subject leaders and teachers before the start of the autumn term.
- Primary headteachers and Year 6 teachers are invited into the secondary school before the October half term to visit pupils in their lessons and look at their work. They discuss their progress with the pupils and see if their work reflects growth or shows any deterioration, for example in their demonstration of knowledge. Secondary leaders believe that primary colleagues are best placed to pick up any evidence of a dip in progress that can then be addressed by the form tutor.
- Vulnerable pupils – these pupils are offered a much longer transition phase. The special educational needs coordinator visits all partner schools.
- Year 6 parents' evening – secondary staff attend this event to be available for parents and carers to talk to about any aspect of transition.

- Sixth formers – these students work as lunchtime supervisors in the primary schools, which enhances the links between the secondary school and its partner primary schools.

Conclusion

The core philosophy at Eggescliffe School is that Key Stage 3 is the 'bedrock'. To ensure that pupils make the best possible progress during this key stage, effective transition from primary school is a very high priority.

The success of the cross-phase work on transition is summed up in this primary headteacher's comment:

'We feel confident that our children are moving to a school that really cares about them and accepts the levels they are working at, giving them a solid base on which to move into the Key Stage 3 curriculum.'

2. Batley Girls' High School Visual Arts College, West Yorkshire

Batley Girls' High School is an 11–18 academy. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.

This case study shows how leaders at Batley Girls' High School use a range of approaches in Key Stage 3 to drive pupils' aspirations for the future. Strategies include early careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and a system of 'graduation' to enhance motivation to succeed in Key Stage 3 and beyond.

The good practice in more detail

School leaders take a proactive approach to carefully analysing the needs of pupils to prepare them well for their future lives. Leaders identified that a focus on CEIAG was necessary to promote aspiration and to support pupils' achievement.

They recognised that the developments could only be fully successful with the involvement of parents and a better parental understanding of the possibilities that exist for their children.

To support the work, the school uses the following strategies.

- The provision for CEIAG is mapped across all year groups in the school.

- A lead colleague delivers CEIAG; this colleague also leads the parents' forum. All parents are invited to attend the forum.
- Pupils in all year groups take part in a 'careers convention'. Representatives from a range of professions and industries come to the school for the convention and the pupils visit each provider to find out key information. During their tutor time, pupils develop questions to ask the representatives. They also cover work on gender stereotypes, pressures, skills, personality traits linked to careers and their own likes and dislikes.
- Parents are invited to the careers convention at lunchtime.
- The careers convention takes place in the autumn term and leads into work on options for pupils in Year 8 in the spring term. The school delivers Key Stage 3 over two years. Pupils' responses to the convention are extremely positive and they feel that the event raises their awareness of possible career routes. A pupil in Year 7 commented that, 'even though we are only in Year 7 we can still start to think about what job we would like and about the future.'
- In Key Stage 3, the school hosts a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) event with a range of companies and visiting speakers. Pupils and their parents or carers are invited to this and complete a carousel of practical

activities to raise awareness of STEM-related careers.

- Older pupils take on roles as STEM ambassadors and run clubs for younger pupils.
- Parents are taken for visits to universities in order to experience a typical university day and to find out about funding study at higher education. They comment that the visits 'opened their eyes' and gave them an insight into opportunities for their daughters. They value the chance to be involved in the careers conventions and the STEM events and say that they give them a discussion point with their daughters about their futures.

Key Stage 3 graduation

To further support aspiration and foster good habits, school leaders introduced a 'Key Stage 3 graduation'.

'I revised harder than usual because I didn't want my form to graduate without me.'

To be able to 'graduate', pupils have to meet their personal targets set in English, mathematics, science and two other subjects, show a good attitude to learning and attend well.

Academic gowns, hats and photographs form

part of the graduation ceremony and parents are invited to the celebration. The graduation aims to motivate pupils, praise and recognise good progress and effort, help with aspiration to university and celebrate the end of Key Stage 3.

The fact that the graduation motivates pupils is evident in the comments that older pupils make to their younger peers:

- 'Start working hard as you won't want to miss out.'
- 'I revised harder than usual because I didn't want my form to graduate without me.'
- 'Sometimes you won't feel like revising for assessments but believe me, it is worth it.'

Conclusion

The opportunities for pupils to participate in early careers information, advice and guidance are providing very positive mechanisms for pupils to think about their future lives. As a result, pupils show a strong awareness of the career routes open to them. Because of parental involvement in this, they are able to support discussions that take place at home about careers and options. Parents' awareness of future life chances is enhanced.

The system of Key Stage 3 graduation provides significant motivation for pupils to achieve and promotes future aspiration. In establishing a ceremony to mark success in Key Stage 3, leaders specifically recognise the importance of this period in a pupil's education.

3. Ansford Academy, Somerset

Ansford Academy is a rural academy. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who come from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.

This case study explains how Ansford Academy places a high value on the importance of Key Stage 3 as a distinct phase. It shows how the academy has worked with seven of its partner primary schools in the Ansford Learning Partnership (ALP) to establish a shared system for making valid and reliable judgements about pupils' performance in Key Stages 2 and 3. In doing this, they have enhanced understanding among teachers in the partnership about the curriculum on offer across the primary and secondary phases.

The good practice in more detail

The headteacher has worked with senior leaders to enrich Key Stage 3 as a phase 'in its own right'. Leaders are committed to retaining a three-year Key Stage 3 curriculum and to ensuring that, 'time is a given for students to deepen their understanding and knowledge of as many subjects as possible, not just to prepare for examinations at Key Stage 4.'

The impact of this can be seen in pupils' work and in the way that they discuss their learning. They talk readily about a deeper level of learning and articulate their views on the Key Stage 3 curriculum in a sophisticated way. A Year 9 pupil comments: 'At Ansford we have to learn much more about

each subject – the teachers just go deeper. Whatever question you ask they can go deeper and you get to learn something else.'

Developing a shared assessment system

When reviewing the Key Stage 3 curriculum in the light of recent changes, leaders at the academy recognised that the review process would be strengthened by working closely with their partner primary schools. They identified that in working together they would develop a shared understanding of the curriculum across the key stages and, as a result, be better placed to establish a shared system of assessing pupils' performance.

Leaders across the partnership are committed to the joint work. A primary headteacher explains that: 'assessing without levels presents us with a wonderful opportunity to work more closely together – primary and secondary – in the best interests of the children. We need to know more about the demands of the Key Stage 3 curriculum so that children are prepared when they leave Year 6.'

How is this happening?

Leaders at all levels across the partnership have been driving the changes. Initially, leaders from all of the schools met to clarify the vision and plan practical steps. A partnership action plan was produced. Staff development sessions, joint leadership away-days and external professional development opportunities were agreed and organised.

Leaders identified six distinct phases to their work:

- involving all staff in the vision
- researching the wider evidence base for effective assessment systems and Key Stage 3 curriculum programmes
- selecting appropriate systems to suit the partnership
- setting up pilots
- monitoring and evaluating impact
- reviewing progress.

Currently, staff in all of the partner schools are trialling new assessment statements and evaluating how well these are working alongside the new national curriculum content. Pupils are also evaluating the changes. Communication systems are well established. Meetings have been held with parents, carers and pupils to explain the changes.

Conclusion

Within a short space of time, schools in the partnership have established shared systems for assessing pupils' performance. They are developing systems for enhancing and assuring the quality of the assessment judgements through collaborative moderation processes, which involve considering learning outcomes – such as examples of pupils' work and pupil discussions.

Leaders in the partnership recognise that this is work in progress but that the important initial steps have been taken.

Crucially, they have established a working link between staff in Key Stages 2 and 3 that promotes the importance of a clear understanding of the continuum of learning and assessment between primary and secondary phases of education.

'Assessing without levels presents us with a wonderful opportunity to work more closely together – primary and secondary – in the best interests of the children.'

4. The Deepings School, Lincolnshire

The Deepings School is an 11–18 academy. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who come from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.

This case study shows how The Deepings School's transition and curriculum arrangements ensure that both vulnerable and the most able pupils make the best possible start to their secondary education.

The good practice in more detail

When the new headteacher started, he gave a greater priority to Key Stage 3. He believes that what happens in these early years of secondary education has a clear impact on the achievement of pupils at Key Stages 4 and 5. Primary to secondary transition arrangements ensure that pupils are able to 'hit the ground running' and 'are ready to go as soon as they come through the door'.

Transition

Transition arrangements have evolved over the last few years, building on what has worked well and making improvements so every pupil is ready to make the best possible start to their secondary education.

The Deepings School is organised into three colleges and each college takes responsibility for liaising closely with a number of primary partners. Transition information on each

pupil is detailed and focused on both pastoral and academic aspects.

The school ensures that there are opportunities for primary pupils to come into the school as early as Year 1, for example for music and sporting events. As one primary headteacher said: 'Our pupils use the facilities and it's not an unusual place for them.'

For the last few years, there has been a system where the most vulnerable pupils would visit the school regularly during the latter part of the summer term. These pupils all have some kind of personalised arrangements that involve them visiting the school for up to four sessions before the actual transition day. This arrangement has been so successful that it has grown from only six pupils visiting the school to about 40. These include disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, vulnerable pupils and those who have any other additional needs. During these sessions, they meet with key people such as the first aider and canteen staff, as well as with their college leader and senior leaders. They do work that is focused on building their confidence.

These arrangements concentrate on the whole family rather than just the pupil. This means that 'as soon as they step through the door, everything is ready for them.' During this time, appropriate secondary staff attend relevant meetings for vulnerable children, ensuring that there is a smooth transition of all external support.

Rising Stars

The Rising Stars programme starts in Year 5 and continues all the way through secondary school. The most able pupils from Years 5 and 6 from the partner schools are invited in for a series of subject-based activities, designed for fun and challenge. During these sessions, the most able pupils from Years 7 and 8 act as mentors.

'As soon as they step through the door, everything is ready for them.'

From Year 7 onwards, the most able 20 pupils in all academic subjects in the year group are part of the Rising Stars programme. These pupils are given the opportunity to be challenged and for their horizons to be widened, for example by doing a 'mini-EPQ' (based on the UCAS-

accredited 'extended project qualification'). Each Rising Star is mentored by an older Rising Star.

The programme contributes to pupils leaving school with the best results they can achieve and as confident, knowledgeable, skilled, open-minded young adults.

In addition to this, throughout Key Stage 3 there are 'excel' groups for the most able.

Conclusion

Key Stage 3 pupils speak very positively about their transition from primary to secondary school. They feel their needs are catered for, which helps them to make good progress.

5. Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Tameside is situated in the North West of England. Within the local authority, there are 15 secondary schools, which are a mixture of maintained schools and academies.

This case study shows how the local authority has worked strategically with Key Stage 3 leaders of English in its schools and academies to plan the Key Stage 3 curriculum to prepare pupils better for the challenge and skills required at Key Stage 4.

The good practice in more detail

Heads of English and the local authority strategic leader for English invited representatives from examination boards to their network meeting to present the new GCSE examination specifications. Members of the group quickly understood that, despite changes to the new Key Stage 3 curriculum, pupils were not going to be fully prepared for success at Key Stage 4.

The group established that they needed a new way of assessing pupils' work and that there were important skills in the new GCSE that they were not currently focusing on in the teaching of their subject. In addition, the texts that they were studying in Key Stage 3 were not preparing pupils for those that they would need to examine in Key Stage 4; the jump may be too large to bridge, if pupils were not introduced to

them in Year 7. The group therefore established a Key Stage 3 working party.

The working party was made up of the Key Stage 3 leaders for English from 13 out of the 15 schools and academies within the authority. The aim of the group was to look at where the gaps in pupils' skills were and fill them by working collaboratively. They also needed to ensure that the assessment in Key Stage 3 was fit for purpose and that it prepared pupils effectively for Key Stage 4.

Each school created, trialled and assessed a unit of work for Key Stage 3 based on one aspect of the GCSE examination. Each unit ended with an unseen test that mirrored the style of the assessment in the GCSE examination. Each school then shared their unit with the other schools. This meant that all schools had access to a unit of work for each type of text and assessment that could be taught in Key Stage 3.

Alongside the end of unit tests, the Key Stage 3 English leaders felt that pupils needed an ongoing tool to help them understand how to progress and work towards goals. The idea was that the model should use a one to nine scale and should continue through both Key Stages 3 and 4, as it would provide a clear path of progress.

In order to look at how best to develop this, two of the English departments and the local authority leader worked on creating and piloting materials for use in assessment. The team developed assessment grids for reading and writing that combined criteria previously used for assessing pupils at

Key Stage 3 and the new GCSE descriptors. This approach identified where the skills gaps in the former Key Stage 3 assessment model were and enabled teachers in the working party to plan schemes of work that included the new GCSE skills.

When this was shared with the rest of the working party, it became the foundation of all further planning of schemes of work. Each representative of the working party used their learning when preparing the reading and writing grids in their schools. They trained their departments on the one to nine grading scale and on the skills that they needed to embed with pupils at Key Stage 3.

All schools in the local authority are now in a position to implement the reading and writing one to nine grids from September 2015 and are working with a uniform approach to assessment in English.

Conclusion

The collaborative approach taken to planning means that all schools are able to moderate their Key Stage 3 work together. This helps to ensure high standards and a consistency of expectation in pupils' work. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are better prepared for GCSE and benefit from teachers in all schools who are working to a clear and consistent model, who are well trained and who have designed and taken ownership of the scheme themselves.

There is now a strong network of English teachers within the schools, who are sharing schemes of work and resources and, as a result, reducing their individual planning workload.

The consistency of approach helps with the induction of new teachers to the local authority, as they are able to be trained on the same model of assessment and share their practice more easily.

6. Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy, Lancaster

Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy is a secondary school in Lancaster. The school is a teaching school. A working farm forms part of the school.

This case study shows how leaders at Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy develop key life skills among pupils at Key Stage 3. These skills include: literacy; an understanding of sustainability and 'stewardship of the land'; the active promotion of respect; and the importance of helping others.

The good practice in more detail

School leaders at Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy take a proactive approach to developing the knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils need – not only to succeed in examinations but also to play an active role as a good citizen.

Literacy

Leaders identified that a high level of literacy is needed to achieve the very best standards at GCSE and A level. They decided to adopt a whole-school focus on promoting literacy skills. They started by concentrating intensively on reading with the view that 'the development of writing stems from the love of reading'.

The school uses the following strategies.

- A literacy lead group looks at the development of literacy in school. This group includes: the literacy governor; literacy leads from each of the core subjects; members of the senior leadership team; the librarian; the learning support coordinator; and a progress leader. The literacy governor has visited a local primary school to see how literacy is taught.
- A staff development programme is delivered to give teachers strategies to teach reading in their subject area.
- A primary headteacher visits to talk to secondary staff about teaching phonics.
- Additional time is allocated to reading lessons in the library for pupils in Key Stage 3. In these reading lessons, pupils read, debate, look at author and reading websites, consider 'video trailers' for books and learn about 'information literacy' strategies to understand effective internet searching.
- Reading assessments for all pupils include a breakdown of the specific aspects that a pupil needs to develop, followed by a programme designed to meet these needs.
- 'Key words' are put on display in other subject areas.
- Spelling quizzes are held across the curriculum.
- 'Ripley reads' book reviews completed by pupils are issued to tutor groups.

- A system of stickers indicates pupil recommendations on books in the library.
- Authors are brought in to visit classrooms.
- The use of a literacy skills booklet in tutor time in Year 7 reinforces the skills covered at primary school.
- Additional interventions for spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting take place during tutor time.
- Older pupils are trained to do 'guided reading' sessions with younger pupils.
- 'Top 10 reads' recommendations are issued to pupils on transition in Year 6.
- All pupils in Year 6 are given a book to read over the summer holidays that they will then use in Year 7; the author of the book then visits the school in the autumn term and a 'celebration of reading' day is planned around the visit.

The development of broader life skills

In order to develop pupils' broader life skills, the school takes a distinctive approach to the curriculum and extra-curricular expectations. All pupils in Key Stage 3 study horticulture and agriculture and have outdoor and indoor lessons in this area. From this learning opportunity, pupils develop an understanding of sustainability and care for the land and for animals, the environment and the local context.

The development of personal characteristics, including respect and service to the community, is given a high priority. All pupils in Year 7 complete the Archbishop of York's 'Young Leaders Award' programme. In Year 8, pupils complete an in-school 'tri-star' project. The project has three strands – charity and community; academic progress; and a personal challenge that looks at wider participation in areas such as music, sport and clubs.

Leaders say that the initiatives help to develop confidence, support for others and participation. Pupils learn right from wrong and develop their character to help them to become fully rounded citizens.

Pupils comment that the challenges have helped them to develop perseverance, resilience and an understanding of the importance of helping others.

Conclusion

The opportunities that leaders provide help to equip pupils with key skills and values for life. The development of the approach to reading and literacy has been carefully thought-out and is supported by essential staff training to help achieve consistency of approach.

The full involvement of pupils, staff and governors in all projects is integral to the success of the approaches.

7. Queensbridge School, Birmingham

Queensbridge School is a secondary school in the Moseley area of Birmingham and is one of the city's most socially diverse schools. It has a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. The large majority of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and a high proportion is learning English as an additional language.

This case study shows how an exciting and innovative enterprise curriculum in Year 7 provides an excellent transition from primary school, enabling pupils to make rapid progress, often from low starting points. The well-thought-out curriculum in Years 7 and 8 means that pupils enjoy their learning and rapidly develop their literacy skills.

The good practice in more detail

The headteacher and his senior leaders at Queensbridge School have an unswerving belief that what happens at Key Stage 3 plays a vital part in a child's educational journey.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum at Queensbridge is characterised by 'The Enterprise' in Year 7 and 'Innov8' in Year 8. In addition to their important individual work and whole-class lessons, pupils learn to work together in teams to demand the highest standards of themselves and their classmates. They tackle demanding material requiring intellectual rigour and a breadth of knowledge.

Year 7: 'The Enterprise'

At any point in the year, pupils are working on a module from Enterprise A and a module from B, each one centred on a 'big question'. Through Enterprise A, pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills in English, modern foreign languages, history, religious education (RE) and geography. Through Enterprise B, pupils are given the time and space for deep learning in music, drama, design technology and dance. Each Enterprise A module includes three written formal assessments and a literacy homework booklet.

Underpinning all aspects is a rich canon of historical and contemporary literature spanning the genres of poetry, prose and drama. A weekly one-hour reading lesson is centred on a book that links Enterprise A and B. Pupils are taught by one teacher for each module, which allows for much stronger teacher/pupil relationships, as occurs in many primary schools.

The model allows pupils to make connections between subjects.

Outside of the Enterprise, pupils have separate mathematics, science, computer science, physical education and Spanish lessons.

Year 8: 'Innov8'

Innov8 lessons focus on one of three curriculum areas (history, geography and RE) for cycles of 12 weeks, for six

hours each week. The extended block of time allows for deeper learning under the umbrella of a 'big question' with the same teacher.

Effective lifelong learning inventory

Queensbridge is in its third year of using the effective lifelong learning inventory (ELLI) programme.

This is designed to help pupils build a language of learning to understand, discuss and develop a wide range of transferable skills that will impact on them as lifelong learners. As one Year 8 pupil said, 'you can take it with you for years'.

The ELLI programme has been developed alongside the main partner primary schools, which means there is a common language for learning across both phases.

As one primary headteacher said, 'It's powerful for children to know it won't all be different in secondary school. This has clearly helped transition.'

Period 6

All Key Stage 3 pupils are involved in a weekly after-school activity. School staff and external providers run various activities in four different categories: engagement and motivation; creativity and craft; sport; and learning enhancement.

Pupils sign up for four different activities each year and they are targeted, if necessary, to ensure breadth of experience or to respond to particular needs.

Conclusion

The Key Stage 3 curriculum model at Queensbridge School is rooted in the transformative power of deep learning.

The success of this approach is evident as pupils make excellent progress in all subjects, with many going on to challenging courses at top universities.

'It's powerful for children to know it won't all be different in secondary school. This has clearly helped transition.'

8. Bristol Metropolitan Academy, Bristol

Bristol Metropolitan Academy is part of the Cabot Learning Federation. It has a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found nationally. It has a very transient pupil population, with a high number joining throughout the each year, many with no Key Stage 2 data.

This case study shows how leaders have created a Key Stage 3 curriculum that is responsive to their pupils' needs. At the heart of this curriculum is the development of literacy skills that prepare pupils for the demands of Key Stages 4 and 5 and for future education or employment.

'We build our curriculum around those who come through the door'

Through the 'Met learning' curriculum, subjects are taught discretely but with planned literacy development opportunities and assessment running throughout.

The effectiveness of what happens at Key Stage 3 has been further enhanced by some cross-phase working within the federation.

The good practice in more detail

As the principal states, 'We build our curriculum around those who come through the door'. Poor literacy skills are the biggest barrier to pupils making progress at Bristol Metropolitan Academy so the development of these skills runs through the Key Stage 3 curriculum 'like a stick of rock'.

'Met learning'

'Met learning' includes humanities, design technology, ICT and expressive arts. These subjects are taught discretely, so there is no loss of subject content or rigour, but with a focus on literacy. This model gives literacy a strategic, ongoing emphasis rather than it taking place in a 'bolt-on' manner.

The senior leader in charge of this works closely with heads of department, providing them with high quality literacy training and resources. Consequently, subject leaders do not feel that this model is being 'done to' them, but rather they feel in charge of their own subject and value the support from the senior leader on the literacy element of the curriculum. It puts the notion of transferable knowledge and skills at the centre of learning and focuses on preparing pupils for the challenges of Key Stages 4 and 5 and beyond.

Within the subjects, there is a planned writing activity twice a year. The same writing template is used across all subjects. The written tasks are marked for literacy and subject content. Moderation of the literacy assessment is robust. It is carried out three times a year and includes key senior and middle leaders.

English lessons

In Years 7 and 8, pupils have five lessons of English a week. These are described as 'home' and 'away' lessons. The 'home' lessons focus on literacy skills while the 'away' lessons are based more on English subject content. There is a different teacher for each type of lesson. The groups are finely settled but there is fluid movement between the sets.

Reflection lesson

A reflection lesson takes place once a week to give pupils the opportunity to reflect on their learning and focus again on literacy skills across the curriculum.

Numeracy

Rather than trying to force numeracy superficially into every subject, there is an explicit emphasis on this in the geography, design technology and the science curricula. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills are built into the schemes of work in these subjects.

Enrichment

In Years 7 and 8, a wide range of enrichment is timetabled for two lessons per week. Pupils really enjoy this aspect of the curriculum and the opportunities it affords them to broaden and deepen their learning.

Cross-phase working

A recent conference where colleagues experienced cross-phase teaching 'blew away a lot of myths'. The transition form that is now in place is a result of joined-up thinking across phases. Moderation across the phases helps to prevent a dip at the start of Key Stage 3.

Conclusion

The Key Stage 3 curriculum develops pupils' confidence and their ability to learn. It helps them to think independently and communicate effectively in a range of contexts. The impact of this is clear to see as the pupils move through Key Stage 4, 5 and beyond.

Research publications feedback

We are interested in finding out how useful you have found this publication.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or are you just interested? We would welcome your views and ideas. Complete our survey [here](#).