

The Curriculum Journey@NCC

NCC has worked on curriculum development since 2013/14 for our “ project “ pupils and on the whole school since February 2019.

The school eagerly volunteered for the Ofsted Pilot of the draft framework in February 2019 and was visited by two HMI and an O. I . Inspectors were pleased with our “ joined-up “ curriculum plan, quality of teaching and behaviour but were keen to explore how departmental curriculum planning supported the acquisition and development of knowledge .

The February 2019 Ofsted Pilot really kicked started our deep thinking about the power and centrality of curriculum for all subjects. A series of staff training sessions including a presentation by Mick Waters supported our emerging curriculum thinking.

As a result, all departments became engaged in a broad dialogue and training about curriculum intent. The focus was very much based around Professor Michael Young’s ideas of “powerful knowledge” and the right of every child to have access to this knowledge. The importance of curriculum development in relation to sequencing and the concomitant growth of schemata in the long term memory was also explored through staff inset throughout 2019 and early 2020.

It is important to emphasise however that curriculum development has been central to NCC for the last 8 years.

From 2013 we have welcomed hundreds of refugee children through our doors. In order to give them the greatest opportunity in UK society, we have had to design and implement a parallel curriculum that is based on their starting points and the shared aspirations for their futures. This “ project “ curriculum has various strands and offers access to mainstream and KS5. In other words, questions of curriculum intent, implementation and impact were key aspects of our work long before they became the touchstones of school inspection. We believe that by supporting 100s of these young people in becoming successful citizens of the UK over a period of nearly 10 years that this mature and multilayered curriculum has proven itself to be quite exceptional. The school is hosting a national conference to share best practice in the education of refugee / immigrant children in the Spring term.

There is no doubt in my mind that our experience in curriculum development since 2013 supported our efforts from 2019 onwards.

Once the question of intent was worked through we began the process of codification of our ideas. In many cases this involved departments rewriting large parts of their curriculum. We went for a tripartite approach of curriculum visuals, curriculum maps and schemes of work. This of course is an everlasting odyssey. Work was departmental based and has been regularly evaluated and reviewed by Line managers. Curriculum quality is also assessed through Rolling Curriculum Reviews whereby we try to simulate the DD methodology.

The codification process was supported by regular reading and discussion. Staff are familiar with Mary Myatt, Ruth Ashbee, John Tomsett and of course Christine Counsell.

In March 2021 the school was visited by 4 senior HMI as part of a pilot Ofsted visit. The inspectors were very pleased with our curriculum work and valued the ambition and challenge inherent in our curriculum. This affirmation enabled the school to sharpen its curriculum focus, supporting other schools and concentrating on implementation

The two Ofsted Pilots within two years have really helped us develop a coherent and demanding curriculum that is giving our pupils the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in modern Britain

Since Easter 2021 we have really pushed on. The school leads "Ambitious curriculum Hubs" for the local Harlesden cluster. So far this term two Ambitious hub meetings have met at NCC to discuss and plan in English, Maths, Science, history and SEND. On both occasions, 40 teachers from the primary and secondary sectors have attended. This builds upon a Harlesden curriculum conference that we held in July. Meetings are planned throughout the year. The objective is to design a Harlesden curriculum between KS2 and KS3 around the 15 cluster schools. A key part of our curriculum process has been to ensure that the scope, sequencing and ambition are fundamental.

We have also worked really hard to ensure that our implementation is first-rate. Teachers understand the importance of checking for understanding. It is a central feature of all our lessons. Similarly, all staff are familiar with development in neuroscience and cognitive understanding. Staff accept that the nurturing of mental schemata is central to helping students learn and remember more. Lesson starters, Do NOWs and Quality assurance of assessments all support this process.

As our curriculum thinking is secure we have also begun to experiment and challenge ourselves to make connections between various disciplines. The concept of the pupil polymath was at the heart of recent training and we believe that this is further evidence of the centrality and quality of our curriculum intelligence and implementation.

All of the above is underpinned by first class teacher subject knowledge .

A further key feature of our work since the last inspection is the development of reading and literacy . This is a significant challenge for not just our EAL students but for many local boys . Teachers focus on tier 3 language in lessons but are also conscious of the overall importance of language development .

We are a thoroughly inclusive school. This requires strong vision and leadership. The school has not PX'd a pupil since 2017/18. We use our inclusion centre , Damascus to keep FTE to an absolute minimum . Boys in this area need to be in school . Attendance is currently above the NA.

Indeed such has been our success in maintaining an inclusive environment that we have opened our own respite provision . For the last 5 years over 250 young people from 15 local schools have attended our PRP . Our records show that none of these individuals were PX'd from their home school upon return . The intervention is very popular and effective .

The school has fidelity to the performance of SEND pupils.
We have a greater % of SEND pupils than the London and NA

The SEND dept is experienced, tenacious and creative. All SEND pupils follow the full KS3 Curriculum. A small group of Y10 pupils are working on a skills package designed to support their lifelong development. These young men are chosen on the basis of a thorough understanding of their EHCP/ SEND needs.

We believe that further embedding the inclusive vision is our next step. Results for SEND in 2019 were strong but the pandemic has hit this community hard. We have seen lots of mental health issues. The school has been at the centre of the community in supporting families but there is a lot of bitterness and disillusionment in NW10.

Firstly, for example, we consciously encourage the concept of active student voice. The SC meets weekly and discusses a wide range of school issues including questions of implementation. Many of these pupils are also active in London Citizens and speak at events such as the London Living Wage campaign.

Secondly, we are central in building links with the consortium building the HS2 / OOC interchange. This has led to shared curriculum work and employment opportunities. We were also involved in organising a major careers day at the LA during the Oct half term.

In addition, the school has recently hosted a health conference for parents as well as ongoing classes for families on financial awareness. The HT helped organise and spoke at an event aimed to improve the take up of the C19 vaccine amongst the local community where rates

are lamentably low . This ethos is further reflected in the holiday camps that we have run for the last 7 years throughout the summer for 300 children a day and weekend classes for EAL families.

The school is also working with The Constantinian Charitable Trust to support two schools in South Beirut.

All of the above is intended to support the life chances of our pupils and prepare them for the next stage of their lives. They sit upon a robust and targeted intervention programme that more than anything else defines and promotes our inclusivity.