

Understanding My World

The aim of this policy is to define the curriculum area 'Understanding My World' and how this develops into 'Understanding the Wider World', 'Creative Arts' and finally the Foundation Subjects of the National Curriculum. Stephen Hawking School believes that 'Understanding my World' is about exploration of environments, people and cultures and how the arts impact upon these areas.

Understanding my World can be defined as the relationship of an individual with the people, places and cultures in their immediate environment. As part of this it also incorporates the way that an individual experiences the arts and the impact that they have on that person's immediate environment.

In the early stages of learning, pupils may encounter experiences which are structured by the adults around them. This structure may include the pace at which new experiences are introduced, the way in which those experiences are managed, the role of the adult and the strategies employed. Children at these early stages of learning may begin to develop their understanding of places, people and cultures using their immediate environment only with frequent repetition and a framework that provides routine to their experiences. Familiarity with places, people, cultures and different art forms will raise the child's awareness. Via this raised awareness the child will then begin to give consistent responses to everyone, their immediate environment and their experiences. Throughout these early stages of learning the adult may have to support each pupil to discover with purpose.

As pupils develop their knowledge using their immediate environment, and a small number of known adults along with cultures and arts that are known to them, they are supported and helped to engage in co-active exploration by the frequent repetition of activities and opportunities. As a result of this they are provided with the foundation to develop an awareness of difference and change. In order for the pupils to develop this understanding, they need clear and limited access to places and people to encourage them to explore things in different ways. Each pupil's reactions to these explorations needs to be observed, and recorded.

The awareness that the pupil develops as a result of these encounters becomes the basis for their later curiosity.

Early Year's Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas of Learning Development include the specific areas "Understanding the World" and "Expressive Arts and Design". In Early Years, these are contained within the school's focussed curriculum area of "Exploration". The youngest children in the school are gradually introduced to a range of experiences mainly within their own classroom. Many children starting school have had very little exposure to the world outside the hospital and their own home and this process of widening their experiences is adapted to each child's needs and pace of development. The pupils' experiences are gradually developed and they begin to use different parts of the classroom for different activities. Eventually they are introduced to other areas of the school for some lessons - for instance, using the cookery room for food play. By the time the children leave Early Years, it is expected that they are familiar with other parts of the school.

Children in Early Years are offered a range of sensory based activities involving the arts. Most of these activities are repeated over a period of time allowing the children time to become familiar with them, and therefore to be able to begin to anticipate and express likes and dislikes.

All children in Early Years participate in and make a valued contribution to whole school assemblies and celebrations and the displays used in these events.

Aims for Understanding my World

- To develop an awareness of, and interest in, themselves, their immediate environment and the people in their immediate environment
- To take part in, and show an awareness of, celebrations and activities based on their own and other's cultures
- To take part in arts activities and be aware of these happening in their immediate environment.

Understanding the Wider World

'Understanding the Wider World' can be defined as the relationship between people, places and cultures over time. Children develop an understanding of the world around them via their experiences of places, the people in those places and how they can interact, affect and be affected by both the people and the places. At Stephen Hawking School we believe that this is fundamental to the development of an appreciation of the wider world, its impact on us and our impact on it.

This understanding of people places and cultures will build upon the experience that children had during earlier stages of learning, in particular their understanding of and consistent responses they made to their immediate environment and the people in it. During earlier stages of learning the pupil has had significant adult support in exploring their environment but during 'Understanding the Wider World' the pupil will need a combination of coactive exploration and more independent exploration. It is as part of this that the adult's support moves from physical support to verbal support where the adult narrates or provides a commentary to the pupil's experience. It is through the adult support that pupil's understanding of the wider world is guided to become geographical, historical or religious experiences, enabling pupils to develop ideas that form the basis for future learning within these subject areas.

During 'Understanding my World' the children's encounters are limited. During 'Understanding the Wider World' their encounters are extended and this begins to develop their curiosity. As a result of this they begin to be more proactive in their interactions, remembering learnt responses over longer periods, exploring in more complex ways and applying potential solutions systematically. They will also begin to understand about their impact upon environments and people and the impact of people and environments on them. In order to encourage pupils to become more proactive in their interactions adults need to be aware of their likes and dislikes and to support them in making more complex choices.

In 'Understanding the Wider World' pupils will be encouraged to look at different lifestyles and significant people around them. They will look at how things in the past are different from the present. Pupils will also look at how time has impacted up both their immediate and wider environment. This will involve the pupil's experiencing questions about places and observing and beginning to record their experiences.

Pupils will need to describe what places are used for and how they differ from other places around them. They will make observations based on where things are placed in their immediate and wider environment and look for changes over a short period of time.

Aims for Understanding the Wider World

- To develop an awareness of, and interest in, themselves and how they can interact with their immediate and wider environment
- To develop an awareness of, and interest in, people around them and the impact that these people have on them and the impact they have on others
- To develop an awareness of other cultures and how these cultures celebrate events. To be aware of people from different cultures.

The Curriculum - Geography.

Sebba defines geography as 'the relationship between people and places'. (1995)

From this definition, Geography can be seen to be about developing an understanding of our environments and of how people interact with those environments.

Geographers ask questions such as: -

- What is this place like?
- Where is this place in relation to where I live or other places I know?
- How is it similar to, or different from, other places?
- How is this place changing?
- What would it be like to be in this place?
- What do I like about this place?
- How is this place connected with other places?

Pupils with learning difficulties will need to be presented with these questions, and the evidence to answer them in small manageable steps that each pupil is able to learn from. Pupils will need to start with developing an understanding of their environment, working from things within arm's reach out to a wider environment around the school and home. At the same time it will be important to offer them experiences of other environments in order to ensure that they experience the breadth of differing environments.

Aims for Geography

- to extend and develop an awareness of their surroundings
- to identify and explore features of the local environments
- to look at and experience the variety of ways that land is use

- to understand that certain activities take place in particular areas, both in and out of school
- to understand how the environment affects our lives.
- to experience the cultural diversity offered by different environments
- to experience the use of different forms of recording used by geographers.

The Curriculum - History

History can be defined as the study of the past in order to understand the present. (Sebba 1994) Many would argue that including the word past in the definition does not represent History, as it is about people and their effect on each other and events. Therefore History is not just about the past as prehistoric events such as the dinosaurs are excluded from this. History is also about the study and interpretation of evidence as well as the study of dates and events.

Pupils with learning difficulties will need to be presented with a limited number of sources of evidence that will allow them to study and form an understanding of events that occurred earlier. They will also need to start with events that are within their memory and then to build on this ability by looking at events and evidence from times before their living memory.

Aims of the History curriculum

- to develop an understanding the present and the past
- to arouse an interest in the past. To develop a natural curiosity and through this to help the pupils to raise fundamental questions and to raise speculation
- to help to give a sense of identity. Through History pupils can learn about the origins and story of their families, and of other groups to which they belong, of institutions, beliefs, values and customs.
- to help to give the pupils an understanding of their own cultural roots and shared inheritance
- to enrich other areas of the curriculum History draws on the record of the past and therefore may inform and draw upon other areas of the curriculum.

The Curriculum - Religious Education

Religious education is concerned with three main areas:

- the spiritual and moral dimension which is concerned with the search for meaning, a purpose in life and the ability to make judgements about how to behave and act.
- the knowledge of beliefs and practice which is based around the six world main religions of Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism.
- the effect of religion on human experience which is about how people lead their lives based upon expectations from certain faiths.

Aims for Religious Education (Taken from the Tower Hamlets Agreed syllabus)

Religious Education should help children;

- to acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principle religions represented in Great Britain;
- to develop an understanding of the influence of beliefs, values and traditions on individuals, communities, societies and culture;
- to enhance their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development by reflecting on experiences and beliefs in the light of teaching;
- to develop a positive attitude towards other people regardless of their gender, race or religion;
- to help to develop the skills to live harmoniously with in a diverse society;
- respect the right of people to hold beliefs which are different from their own.

Assessment

Assessment of all areas of understanding the wider world will be carried out in line with the methods outlined in the school's assessment recording and reporting policy