

Curriculum Design (Primary)



Curriculum Design Principles

Principles for curriculum design

The curriculum should be designed on the basis of the following principles:

- Challenge and enjoyment
- Breadth
- Progression
- Depth
- Personalisation and choice
- Coherence
- Relevance

The principles must be taken into account for all children and young people.

They apply to the curriculum both at an organisational level and in the classroom and in any setting where children and young people are learners.

The principles will assist teachers and schools in their practice and as a basis for continuing review, evaluation and improvement. They apply to the curriculum at national, education authority, school and individual levels and must be taken into account for all children and young people

Although all should apply at any one stage, the principles will have different emphases as a child or young person learns and develops.

Challenge and enjoyment

Children and young people should find their learning challenging, engaging and motivating. The curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all.

At all stages, learners of all aptitudes and abilities should experience an appropriate level of challenge, to enable each individual to achieve his or her potential. They should be active in their learning and have opportunities to develop and demonstrate their creativity. There should be support to enable children and young people to sustain their effort.

Breadth

All children and young people should have opportunities for a broad, suitably weighted range of experiences. The curriculum should be organised so that they will learn and develop through a variety of contexts within both the classroom and other aspects of school life.

Progression

Children and young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18 within a single curriculum framework.

Each stage should build upon earlier knowledge and achievements. Children should be able to progress at a rate which meets their needs and aptitudes, and keep options open so that routes are not closed off too early.

Progression should be tracked using the experiences and outcomes

Depth

There should be opportunities for children to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning. As they progress, they should develop and apply increasing intellectual rigour, drawing different strands of learning together, and exploring and achieving more advanced levels of understanding.

Personalisation and choice

The curriculum should respond to individual needs and support particular aptitudes and talents. It should give each child and young person increasing opportunities for exercising responsible personal choice as they move through their school career.

Once they have achieved suitable levels of attainment across a wide range of areas of learning, the choice should become as open as possible. There should be safeguards to ensure that choices are soundly based and lead to successful outcomes.

Coherence

Taken as a whole, children and young people's learning activities should combine to form a coherent experience. There should be clear links between the different aspects of children and young people's learning, including opportunities for extended activities which draw different strands of learning together.

Relevance

Children and young people should understand the purposes of their activities. They should see the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, present and future.

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/howisthecurriculumorganised/principles/>

Application of the principles (from BtC 3)

The experiences and outcomes are the key tool for curriculum planners in designing the **breadth** of learning activities. The experiences and outcomes include aspects such as enterprise, sustainability and creativity which schools have sometimes had to plan as additions to their curriculum. Time allocations for each curriculum area are not being specified nationally. The broad principle is that children need sufficient time to make good progress through all the experiences and outcomes and achieve the learning set out at each level securely so that they can apply their learning in a range of situations. Where this is not being achieved in an aspect of their learning, then more time may be required or changes to learning and teaching approaches or support may be needed.

The experiences and outcomes also provide the basis for **challenge and enjoyment** and progression. Undemanding experiences, such as worksheets, copying, word searches or repeated low level activities, are unlikely to provide effective tools in learning through the experiences and outcomes; the experiences and outcomes are designed to open up opportunities for active, challenging and enjoyable learning. Planning will need to use this framework to develop a range of resources designed imaginatively for learning that responds to the needs of children and the school community. The organisation of experiences and outcomes into levels will help teachers to plan for progression to meet the differing needs of learners, from those children who enter primary schools still requiring support for their learning at early level to those at the later stages who are ready to be challenged by more advanced concepts and contexts.

The encouragement of **depth** of learning challenges primary teachers to think beyond the notion of progression as moving quickly from one topic or level to the next. The time spent on discussion of learning, explaining it to others, applying what has been learned in different contexts and spending time to probe and research a particular issue adds depth to learning. In planning for depth and progression, teachers will need to make professional judgements about when children would benefit from further learning contexts at one level and when they need the fresh challenge of moving on to the next level.

Primary schools have major advantages in promoting **coherence** by helping children to see links between different aspects of learning within and across subjects and curriculum areas and in interdisciplinary studies. The primary teacher's overview of learning across the curriculum and the flexibility within their organisation of the school day are major potential strengths in promoting coherence in learning. This assists the planning of the curriculum as a whole and in the day to day work of staff.

The principle of **relevance** should be used to help those planning the curriculum in selecting content which connects with the child's experience, learning and interests in and beyond the school environment and ensuring that such links are made by class teachers using their in-depth knowledge of the whole child during learning and teaching. This will enable learners to understand the relevance of their classroom learning, for example seeing connections with experiences in their family or local community, the world of work, their experiences of travel or their interests in sport or media.

Primary teachers' depth of knowledge of their pupils' prior experiences, learning and interests helps them to take account of **personalisation and choice** during teaching and to provide 'customised' support and feedback. Rich opportunities for choice at these stages may be provided by the school as a whole, for example in personal projects or where pupils have choice in activities sessions and in classrooms where learners are involved in the planning and assessment processes and encouraged to pursue aspects of learning independently.

Principles for curriculum design

The Design Principles “apply to the curriculum both at an organisational level and in the classroom and in any setting where children and young people are learners” (*Education Scotland website*). They do not all lend themselves to a simple tick box type of audit. A curriculum based on the design principles will evolve as a result of, amongst other things, professional development and dialogue to build understanding, sharing and moderation of practice, regular evaluation and reflective discussion. Learners should be fully involved in reviewing how well the design principles are being applied for them. Use the following table to take a snapshot of how well your curriculum articulates with the principles and what needs to happen now.

Design Principle	As HT, what are your expectations?	How do you, or could you, evidence this?	What do you need to do to further embed this principle?	Form a brief statement that could be included in your curriculum plan/SQ report/HMle self-evaluation.
Challenge and enjoyment				
Breadth				
Progression				
Depth				
Personalisation and choice				
Coherence				
Relevance				