

**METROPOLITAN  
BOROUGH OF KNOWSLEY**

**Primary Building Schools for  
the Future**

**Curriculum  
Final Report**

## 1.0 Background

Knowsley has set out long term plans to transform the delivery of education. Knowsley's Primary Building Schools for the Future programme will take forward the vision set out in *Future Schooling in Knowsley*:

*'To create a world class education system with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments at the heart of local communities, in which schools support the needs of the whole child; are responsive and adaptive to societal and economic change offering learning for all, alongside integrated child, youth and family services; and develop partnerships with wider community services.'*

In the first 3 years of the programme, these changes will be achieved in 3 new primary schools; this will then be rolled out across other schools as investment becomes available. Prior to beginning the project a period of detailed research has been undertaken to advise principles for reform, exploring new ideas within a primary context at a local, national and international level in order to establish a series of detailed models by which Knowsley will seek to implement change. This report focuses upon work carried out in exploring curriculum models for inclusive primary schools.

Currently there are varying standards and issues in primary provision and diminished opportunities and life chances of the young people in Knowsley. There is a shared determination between the DfES, schools and local authorities (LAs) that all children are appropriately supported in making the progress of which they are capable.

In line with National developments around a renewed Framework, and reflecting the local and national agenda, the research undertaken forms a significant development that will build on the learning needs of our pupils in local context and offers strategic guidance to schools on innovative curriculum provision.

The documentation supports an important step and brings new impetus and new structures that are a significant development in teaching and learning in across the curriculum and bring the development of a creative and inclusive curriculum blueprint for Knowsley primary schools to support and increase all children's access to excellent teaching, leading to exciting and successful learning.

The blueprinting process for this project has includes extensive research and explored a breadth of tried and tested curriculum models sharing best practice both locally, nationally and internationally.

## 2.0 Findings

The research identifies a number of key findings with regards to the curriculum across Primary Schools. It points to the huge challenge that schools are faced with today in order to provide a broad, balanced, creative and inclusive curriculum for 21st Century learners which will ultimately raise standards.

*"Our task in the next decade is for our education system to become world class. We need to transform national aspirations and expectations for the school system so that we can continue to raise standards year on year."* (Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls July 2007)

The national curriculum is a government statutory requirement that must be adhered to. This is the basic framework detailing all the planned learning opportunities which must be taught in Primary Schools. The renewal of the Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics are offered as recommended structures give a clear sense of the important aspects of literacy that and numeracy that need to be taught to children each year.

Strategies and initiatives have been developed to enhance and broaden the national curriculum into a more rich and balanced package for learning. They have been developed to help meet the challenges that are faced and to work at ensuring that all children have the opportunity to achieve their potential. They include:

- SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) (2004)
- Healthy Schools Initiative (2005)
- Gifted and Talented Initiative (2004)
- The e-strategy (ICT) (2005)
- Extended Schools (2005)
- Personalised learning (2004)
- The Final Report Jim Rose (2006) (Independent Review of Early Reading)
- Guidance from the Renewed Frameworks (2007)
- Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and Teaching in the Primary Years (2004)
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Standards for Learning (statutory 2008)

To enable all children to make progress, schools are expected to implement the National Curriculum inclusion statement. This sets out three principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:

- Setting suitable learning challenges;
- Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs;
- Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

With regards to future practice the evidence suggests that 21st century learners need to be able to draw on a broad skills base in order to best adapt to the rapidly changing personal, social and economic demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Knowsley's outcomes for young people are clear - for all young people to be confident, flexible independent learners for life and to enjoy enhanced life chances and economic well being.

Research outlined in the analytical framework points to key principles which should underpin learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to secure these desired outcomes and in line with findings outlined in 2020 vision, the personalisation agenda, the 4 deeps, and the QCA big picture for curriculum 3 – 19 and Standards for Learning Development and Care for Children Birth to 5 (EYFS). These common themes will inform curriculum provision across all settings and, if addressed through the Primary curriculum in Knowsley will create a seamless educational experience for all young people. The principles detailed below describe what futures curriculum models should include:

- Skills driven curriculum models where key skills are mapped across year groups and key stages so that progression against these skills can be mapped and secured
- Learners are supported in making links with prior and future learning and with their own experiences
- Curriculum mapping allows for varied timescales in pupil engagement so that the curriculum map is made up of short and extended modules providing a mixed economy of experiences tailored to meet the needs of all learners
- Project based learning around explicit themes supporting an extended enquiry approach which enables pupils of all abilities to demonstrate progress against progressional outcomes
- Enhanced opportunities to support citizenship in its broadest sense
- Cross cutting themes which support pupils in making connections and opportunities to practice, refine and transfer learning across a variety of different contexts
- An element of "learning to learn" but from an infused rather than a discreet approach

- ICT is embedded to enhance and enrich effective delivery of identified outcomes of the curriculum
- A curriculum which supports personalisation and inclusion
- Community contexts, enhancing community cohesion by drawing on the expertise of member of the wider community and celebrating local cultures
- Innovative pupil groupings , staff deployment , and learning space to deliver the curriculum in a more flexible way

### **Best Practice Visits**

A number of primary schools locally, nationally and internationally were identified as having best practice. These were identified through a number of channels including word of mouth, the press, the DfES Innovations Unit and the QCA Futures Site. Visits were arranged to share the knowledge, experience and lessons learnt from the senior management and staff in the chosen schools and to investigate a representation of different curriculum practices / models that are available across Britain and further afield. These visits were evaluated and the information collated and used to inform this research.

The breadth of best practice across Knowsley is recognised and it is realised that many schools are classed as outstanding. Three local schools and a collaborative of schools were chosen to feature as case studies in this research, they were chosen due to their different curriculum models. These were:

- **Evelyn Primary School** – Skills Based Curriculum
- **Blacklow Brow Primary School** – Creative Thematic Curriculum
- **Central Area Support** (SEN provision) – Personalised Curriculum
- **The North Huyton Learning Collaborative (NHLC) North Huyton** - Developing a skills based curriculum concerned with the ‘whole child’

The national best practice visits that were identified include:

- **Gawthorpe Primary School, Wakefield** – Themed weeks, OPEN FUTURE initiative timetable changes, involving parents, Changing the learning environment; child initiated learning
- **Serlby Park All Age School, Doncaster** – ‘All age Schooling’
- **Top of the Brow Primary School, Bolton** – Primary International Baccalaureate School
- **Maharishi School, Skelmersdale** – Consciousness Based Education
- **Hadley Learning Community** - Education in three phases and community facilities. Visit focussed on SEN provision and integration across the phases
- **South Farnborough Primary School, Hampshire** - Planning the curriculum in teams

### **3.0 Recommendations**

This research suggests a number of models that best fit the requirements of the curriculum brief to create rich, inclusive curriculum entitlement for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners (as listed below.) It has been acknowledged in this report that due to difficulties in identifying a model which is truly inclusive, further research will be developed by all stakeholders around inclusive curriculum provision.

#### **The International Baccalaureate**

The International Baccalaureate (IB) offers programmes of international education to a worldwide community of schools. Three programmes are offered for students aged 3 to 19 help develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world. There are more than 538,000 IB students at 2,050 schools in 125 countries.

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) is designed for students aged 3 to 12. It focuses on the total growth of the developing child, touching hearts as well as minds and encompassing social, physical, emotional and cultural needs in addition to academic development.

The curriculum framework consists of five essential elements: concepts, knowledge, skills, attitude, and action. The knowledge component is developed through inquiries into six transdisciplinary themes of global significance, supported and balanced by six subject areas.

The IB offers a curriculum and pedagogy, student assessment appropriate to the age range, professional development for teachers and a process of school authorisation and evaluation. International-mindedness in IB students is encouraged. Students must first develop an understanding of their own cultural and national identity. All IB students learn a second language and the skills to live and work with others internationally which is seen as essential for life in the 21st century.

A positive attitude to learning is promoted by creating an enquiry based approach to learning, encouraging students to ask challenging questions, to critically reflect, to develop research skills, and to learn how to learn. Community service is also promoted because there is more to learning than academic studies alone.

The IB does not own or manage any schools. They work with schools around the world (both state and privately funded) that share the commitment to international education.

The Primary IB programme was observed during the best practice to Top o' the' Brow in Bolton. This school is faced with being in an extremely challenging area. The implementation of the curriculum has a huge impact on the value added from key stage 1 to 2.

Rationale for recommending this model:

- Cohesive well structured layered skills based curriculum
- Skills of numeracy and literacy are explicitly and implicitly developed where skills are learned and applied in a variety of contexts
- Explicit mapping
- Thematic approach which supports pupils in making connections with application of skills and competencies
- Explicit Philosophy 4 Children (P4C) element developing reasoning, questioning and communication skills – linked to self esteem
- Project based using enquiry approached with varied lengths
- Continued Professional Development (CPD) mapping and planning for staff in delivery of skills based curriculum
- Global citizen thread runs through curriculum embracing issues around sustainability and development
- Draws in expertise from the community and contextual learning from the community
- Includes Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) mapped across the curriculum meeting the language for life outcomes
- Tried and tested model – Best practice visit to school with very high social deprivation and 60% SEN but equally applicable to other settings
- Transferable to other schools
- Reflects nationally identified developments in curriculum provision and in line with local and national developments in secondary phase

## **Open Futures**

OPEN FUTURE is an education initiative for primary schools currently funded and directed by The Helen Hamlyn Trust. It is currently a pilot curriculum model with a national roll out planned for 2010. This initiative was initially accessed through the best practice Gawthorpe Primary School in Wakefield.

OPEN FUTURE is a skills-based learning programme through which schools can provide substantial and significant curriculum experiences to deliver the National Curriculum and meet the requirements of Every Child Matters (ECM.) The pedagogy underpinning a skills based curriculum has been clearly articulated by The DfES (Excellence and Enjoyment), The RSA (Opening Minds) and The QCA (Key Skills) The OPEN FUTURE programme provides teachers with a practical, unique and effective approach to delivering the curriculum.

The OPEN FUTURE learning programme offers a unique contribution to the primary curriculum by placing an increased emphasis on the provision of:

- Practical, creative, life enhancing, healthy skills useful to children immediately and later in their adult lives.
- Thinking, enquiry and communication skills, which help pupils to be more in charge of their own learning and aims to increase their interest, confidence and motivation
- Increased community involvement in school activities particularly to encourage adults other than teachers to work alongside teachers providing and delivering the curriculum.

OPEN FUTURE is not 'extra' to the curriculum. It is an alternative way of meeting the learning needs of young children and at the same time providing social and practical skills which will enhance their adult relationships and working lives. Through the four strands, growIt, cookIt, filmIt and askIt, Open Future pupils are provided with the skills, attitudes and confidence to work with others to shape and become lifelong learners. (OPEN FUTURE, John Storey National Co-ordinator, 2007.)

Rationale for recommending this model:

- Explicit links with ECM agenda infused across the curriculum offer
- Interlinked project based learning with explicit progression and mixed length projects which engage learners in the development of a wide range of learning and social skills drawing in contexts of globalisation and sustainability
- Skills of numeracy and literacy are explicitly and implicitly developed where skills are learned and applied in a variety of contexts
- Community aspect to the model supports community cohesion and has been found to impact positively on cultural perceptions within white working class communities
- Thematic approach which supports pupils in making connections with application of skills and competencies
- Project maps ensure continuity of application of skills including learning to learn and thinking skills
- Creative pupils groupings and integrated use of space linked to effective curriculum delivery
- Project based using enquiry approached with varied lengths
- Currently a pilot but likely to roll out nationally in 2010
- Reflects nationally identified developments in curriculum provision and in line with local and national developments in secondary phase

### **International Primary Curriculum**

The International Primary Curriculum was launched in the UK in 2000. Schools implementing IPC have been celebrated by Ofsted and HMI and recognised by the Campaign for Learning. The IPC works to national curriculum expectations and complements the national and numeracy strategies.

Like the IB, the IPC model is proven to be transferable and successful, 22 Wirral schools are currently piloting it. Again, it has been fully developed strategically and operationally. It includes a structured cross curricular thematic teaching model with clear learning goals.

The IPC allows children to work at their own level, researching themes and developing their own ideas. Thinking skills are developed through themes of work. Progress and goals are

well tracked through a built in assessment for learning programme and children learn to be global citizens.

The IPC Early Years programme for children aged four and five includes activities undertaken by children aged 4 and 5 help them work towards the subject, personal and international goals of the IPC Main Programme.

The IPC Main Programme has been developed alongside schools around the world. The IPC Main Programme is for children aged 6-12 years-old. The toolkit to accompany the main programme provides:

- Explicit learning goals for each subject of the curriculum.
- 70 fully integrated Units of Work units, based around themes.
- An Assessment for Learning Programme with easy-to-use recording software.
- A Specialist Subject Programme – for Art, Music, PE and ICT.
- Full implementation guides.

The IPC Specialist Programme integrates ICT, Art, PE and Music into many of its units. Through these subjects and others children are able to respond in different ways to the themes they are studying. This is to encourage children to develop their knowledge and skills in each subject.

Rationale for recommending this model:

- Cohesive, well structured layered skills based curriculum
- Explicit mapping
- Thematic approach which supports pupils in making connections with application of skills and competencies
- Explicit P4C element developing reasoning, questioning and communication skills – linked to self esteem
- Project based using enquiry approached with varied lengths
- CPD mapping and planning for staff in delivery of skills based curriculum
- Draws in expertise from the community and contextual learning from the community
- Includes MFL mapped across the curriculum
- Tried and tested model
- Transferable to other schools
- Reflects nationally identified developments in curriculum provision and in line with local and national developments in secondary phase

### **New Zealand Model**

The New Zealand Model (NZM) was discovered by a group of Knowsley Headteachers during a conference trip to New Zealand and visits to 8 local schools. The NZM model is proven to be transferable and is to be rolled out across New Zealand schools although some schools have already chosen to adapt it. Again, it has been fully developed strategically and operationally. It includes a structured cross curricular thematic teaching model with clear learning goals. The key elements of the NZM are divided into the vision, core principles, values, key competencies, eight learning experiences and the pedagogy.

The vision is divided into 4 areas as follows:

- **Confident** – every pupils should be positive in their own identity, motivated and reliable, entrepreneurial, enterprising and resilient
- **Connected** – all pupils should be able to relate well to others and be effective users of communication tools
- **Actively involved** – pupils should be participants in a range of life contexts, contributors to the well being of New Zealand – social, economic and environmental
- **Lifelong learners** – pupils should be literate and numerate, critical and creative thinkers, active seekers, users and creators of knowledge, informed decision makers

The NZM is competency based. The key competencies are described as the '*capabilities people need in order to live, learn, work and contribute as active members of their communities,*' (The New Zealand Curriculum, Ministry of Education, 2006) The New Zealand model identifies 5 key competencies including:

- **Managing self** – this involves self motivation and the ability to establish personal goals and make plans encouraging pupils to be enterprising, resourceful and reliable.
- **Relating to others** – involving interacting effectively with a diverse range of people – ability to listen, negotiate, share ideas and recognise different points of view
- **Participating and Contributing** – concerned with participating and contributing actively in local, national and global communities
- **Thinking** – encouraging the use of creative, critical, metacognitive and reflective processes to question information, experiences and ideas
- **Using language, symbols and texts** – working with and making meaning of codes in which language is expressed

The learning areas as described in the model below are broad grouping of knowledge. The NZM specifies 8 that are considered essential for a general education. These are:

- **Social sciences** – pupils explore how societies work. They can participate and take action as critical, informed and responsible citizens
- **Technology** – pupils explore how people intervene in the world by developing products, and environments to expand possibilities
- **Science** – pupils generate and test ideas and observe, investigate and model in order to develop scientific knowledge, understanding and explanations
- **Mathematics and statistics** – pupils explore relationships in quantities, space and data and learn to express these relationships in ways that help make sense of the world around them
- **Learning languages** – pupils can communicate in an additional language and discover how language and culture shape our personal, group and national identities
- **English** – pupils study, use and enjoy language and literature, communicated orally, visually or in writing
- **Health and physical education** – pupils learn how to support their own well-being and that of others and society, exploring these in health related and movement contexts
- **Arts** – pupils discover how to use their senses, imagination, thinking and feelings as the stimulus for creative action and responses

Rationale for recommending this model:

- Cohesive, well structure layered curriculum model which draws competencies and skills across all phases – 3-19 with commonalities to QCA big picture curriculum model
- Driven by explicit outcomes for learners with subject specific exemplification linked to key competencies
- Thematic approach which supports pupils in making connections with application of skills and competencies
- Clear vision
- Project based using enquiry approached with varied lengths
- CPD mapping and planning for staff in delivery of skills based curriculum
- Global citizen thread runs through curriculum embracing issues around sustainability and development
- Includes MFL mapped across the curriculum meeting the language for life outcomes
- Tried and tested model
- Transferable to other schools
- Reflects nationally identified developments in curriculum provision and in line with local and national developments in secondary phase

## 4.0 Conclusion

It is clear from the research base that current models outlining next practice for primary curriculum provision are driven by similar principles as outlined in the previous sections. Where they differ is around the explicitly identified outcomes for pupils, and around the nature of the skills and competencies that are tracked across the curriculum. In addition the nature of the learning experiences or contents of the models may differ, whilst the desired outcomes at pupil level remain broadly similar.

Two of the local models for curriculum provision are further exemplification of the recommended key curriculum models. Blacklow Brow primary school is a local best practice model which effectively delivers a thematic approach to curriculum provision, in partnership with Creative Partnerships. The model is currently being trialled in 7 local primary schools. This model sits within the same principal structure as the International Primary Curriculum, bringing local and national exemplification together. Evelyn primary school is a local best practice model for skills based curriculum currently being trialled in two other local schools. This model sits within the same principal curriculum structure as International Baccalaureate bringing together local and international practice. These models exemplify current best practice and have many strengths in that they support teachers and pupils in identifying progression across a broader canvas than purely subject specific outcomes whilst providing pupils with a broad, balanced and engaging learning experience.

The third local model from Central Area support exemplified best practice in personalising the curriculum to secure inclusive provision for pupils with special educational needs. It has however been difficult to identify a model which is truly inclusive in that it effectively delivers outcomes across all learners in an inclusive primary setting. This aspect of the research needs to be further developed.

Nationally identified next steps point to curriculum continuity driven by skills and competencies underpinned by cross theme and subject specific projects and the above models exemplify this principle.

In identifying these models for primary provision explicit links can be made with secondary curriculum models which are developing locally as part of the “deep curriculum” and “deep learning” strands. This will support schools in ensuring that learners are equipped with the personal learning and thinking skills required to engage in learning in a different way in the learning centres and , in fact, in becoming life long learners.

Whilst these models ( both local and national ) have been proved to be successful in certain settings, schools will need to be guided in evaluating these models for themselves and in identifying which aspects of the model best fit the nature of their setting, provision, and learners. It is recommended that the identified models form part of a wider consultation process. In the first instance to raise awareness through primary collaboratives and then to engage stakeholders in a robust consultation event and evaluation of the applicability of the models to their own settings and subsequently to reach final recommendations that are owned by all stakeholders. Contacts made through this research will be exploited and partnerships built.