

'Elements'

Reasons behind the development of the new Springwell blended curriculum

The aim behind developing a Springwell 'Blended Curriculum' was a response to teacher frustration over the 'off the shelf' curriculum we had been using, which was not written for the needs of our kind of pupils in mind. Our pupils face a range of challenges – Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, learning difficulties and low learner confidence. Teachers wanted the opportunity to develop their own themes in such a way as to ensure they were engaging for the pupils.

Engagement is crucial – The material and resources must be engaging for the pupils otherwise they will not opt in. Hooks and effective ways into learning contexts are a must.

Story is at the heart of each theme - Pupils become engaged in stories and the curriculum, like the story structure, unfolds episode by episode, with the pupils involved in the journey. Through the use of story, pupils are able to learn about the world around them and learn in context.

Contextual learning – Subjects are not taught discretely – but through the lens of a context that is made meaningful to the pupils and as a result is more relevant.

Relevant learning - Pupils need to know there is a purpose behind the skills, knowledge and understanding we want them to have. By creating a context, for example, where they need to read a map because they are rescuing a child in Snowdonia, they are more likely to engage with, and apply, their learning.

Raising literacy levels – One of the most important outcomes of the new curriculum is to create opportunities for a range of writing for different purposes. This will be easier to produce because of the 'talk to write' approach, where pupils are engaged in the context; speaking and listening opportunities are plentiful and pupils are then compelled to write, e.g as international rescue workers writing home describing the devastation caused by the earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

Time – There are between 8 and 12 hours a week allotted for the Elements curriculum. This enables the teachers to work at a deeper level with pupils to enable meaningful learning to take place.

A humanising curriculum – To develop empathy and compassion for others. By developing themes with stories and characters at the heart, pupils can be enabled in putting themselves in the character's shoes. This is a safe way for the pupil to think about their own life without having to talk about themselves. The use of character is a distancing tool which enables them to look at their own life and experiences safely.

Opening minds - Elements is a curriculum that aims to opens pupils' eyes and minds to cultures, physical environments and social groupings of the world at large, enabling them to develop as tolerant, accepting adults who celebrate diversity and who are consistently thoughtful.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development – The curriculum is designed to move pupils through the learning of facts and the retention knowledge toward developing an understanding of the wider world beyond that which they experience every day. Elements will support pupils in developing more positive upward spirals and to build aspirations around self worth, personal contribution and spirit. The curriculum needs to rehearse children for real life and this is why we have chosen themes and stories that will resonate with them. The themes offer many opportunities for exploration of the area of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, cause and consequence, right and wrong, responsibility and rights, difference and understanding.