



Philosophy of Thematic Learning

2022 - 2023

At the Britannia Education Trust we have created a broad, engaging and relevant curriculum, which allows children to explore themes that stimulate their curiosity, capture their imagination and provide an appropriate level of challenge. Our thematic planning involves integrating curriculum areas into topics or themes with an emphasis on supporting children to make connections between new knowledge, skills and concepts and their existing understanding. When pupils recognise the way in which ideas connect with one another across subjects, it constructs meaning for them. This allows learning to be more natural and less fragmented than when a school timetable is divided into different subject areas.

We believe that thematic units:

- ❑ are powerful tools for building and maintaining students' interest during learning.
- ❑ provide a supportive structure for integrating content areas. Learning around a theme makes sense to children. It helps them to make connections, to transfer knowledge and apply it. It fosters comparison, categorising and pattern finding - building blocks of the scientific method.
- ❑ enable teachers to develop projects that engage pupils' imaginations, allowing them to research collaboratively and independently; this has an impact on deeper learning and understanding.
- ❑ support learning that is experiential, memorable and fun!
- ❑ help pupils develop learning skills more quickly, as each one is connected to and reinforced by others.
- ❑ create an environment where pupils acquire a taste for lifelong learning. As they become involved in how and what they study, children also become more interested in learning.
- ❑ allow parents to become partners in learning around a theme.

One of our central aims is to enable children to acquire a deeper understanding of how a wide range of historical, social, cultural, scientific and environmental factors have shaped the world they live in today. This develops an understanding of the way in which past events, beliefs, values and attitudes have influenced how we have arrived at our present position in the 21st century and how we may move forward in the future.

Another aim is to give children the skills to become confident, successful and independent learners so that they are equipped for life-long learning.

The research behind our approach

Brain research challenges the belief that learning can be separated into traditional domains. Neuroscience and the psychology of learning support the idea that learning is an integrated process focused on constructing meaning and largely dependent on the ability to communicate.

Theories of learning from Bruner (1960), Vygotsky (1962) and Piaget (1969) backed by more current research (Wurman 2000) supports an integrated approach to teaching and learning. This research concludes that learning is a highly integrated process which cannot be easily separated into domains or traditional academic disciplines, such as maths, science and language. Children learn by active engagement with their environment and through social engagement with other human beings. In addition, linking children's learning in a meaningful way can avoid cognitive overload and ensure that learning is both deep and secure (Sweller 2011).