Learning at Rivers: This is Our Journey



Curriculum Development at
Rivers *International School Arnhem*



Curriculum Development

Education is a continual process of improvement. As educators we are constantly adapting and implementing new approaches to learning, striving to help every child reach their full potential. This year I have been given the opportunity to step out of the classroom setting to explore and research what is the best way to deepen the children's skill sets further and enhance the curriculum at Rivers.



Why do we follow The British National Curriculum?

At Rivers International School Primary department, we have always followed the National Curriculum for England and Wales. The curriculum is a diverse and portable framework, providing our children with opportunities to gain universal knowledge which can be easily transferred and deepened should the children move to another country or to another international school. The curriculum is globally recognised, clearly benchmarked and is very broad in terms of content. We adapt it to suit the needs of our international children, to make their learning experience meaningful, relevant, and as tangible as possible in our geographical setting.

The National Curriculum gives guidance as to what should be taught in terms of content and skills. This is divided up by subject area and year group. It is the 'spine' of our approach. What is of the utmost importance to us at Rivers is the flexibility this curriculum offers. We can adapt this to suit the individual needs of our international children, something other very prescriptive curriculums do not allow.

Why are we enhancing our curriculum?

Based on the results of extensive current research, we are enhancing the curriculum to focus even more on skills and enquiry based learning: the most effective way to prepare our children for their future. The process will involve teaching the same content, with an approach which will help draw out life long skills and learning. The two areas we are focusing on are: skills based learning and enquiry based learning.

''Skills-based learning provides classroom environments where independence, thinking skills, collaboration and active learning are developed at the same time as knowledge is acquired. ''

Mike Fleetham, The Thinking Classroom



Enquiry based learning provides an environment where such skills can be developed and nurtured. The plan is to keep the spine of The National Curriculum for our content, and explore what new proven methods are best used in the classroom to help draw out the children's life long skills for their future learning environments.

''Enquiry based learning describes an environment in which learning is driven by a process of enquiry owned by the student. Starting with a scenario and the guidance of a facilitator, students identify their own issues and questions. They then examine the resources they need to research the topic, thereby acquiring the requisite knowledge. Knowledge so gained is more readily retained because it has been by experience and in relation to a real problem.

Enquiry based learning inspires students to learn for themselves, bringing in a real research - orientated approach to the subject''

Dr Bill Hutchings, University of Manchester



What will the children gain by enhancing the curriculum and applying a new approach?

- The children will become more aware of their own personal learning journey, seeing learning through their own eyes
- The children will become more aware of connections in their learning
- The children will become more aware of their impact on the world around them and how they can become responsible and respectful citizens
- The children will further develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

"Information can only be power if you have the skills to use it to develop your journey and turn facts into knowledge. Also, knowledge is only powerful if it is important to you and your context; otherwise it becomes nothing but trivia...we need to develop innovators, leaders and creative thinkers, not trivia experts. We need a curriculum that works toward that goal."

Richard Gerver, Creating Tomorrow's Schools Today

What does it look like?



We will apply these approaches in the following subject areas:

- Interdisciplinary topic enquiries in Geography, History and Science
- Wellbeing
- Cultures and Celebrations

Teachers will continue to teach all the other subject areas and will connect them when appropriate:

- Language and Literacy (English, Dutch, Mother tongue)
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Art and Design
- ICT
- Music
- Physical Education

Together as a team we have been meeting to discuss how we will implement the new approach. We have been organising 'Enquiry Boxes' with lots of fun resources for the children to help support the learning process, as well as sharing ideas
and learning from each other.







The children will be taught through transdisciplinary enquiries (relating to more than one branch of knowledge) and each enquiry has a theme which we call an 'Umbrella':

Umbrella	When?
Explore Your Worlds: A Journey Through The Continents	January - April
Explore Your Worlds: Energy & What would happen if...?	April - July
Explore Your Worlds: Change Is All Around Us	September - December 2019
Explore Your Worlds: Wellbeing- The River That Runs Through Everything	Throughout The Year
Explore Your Worlds: Cultures and Celebrations	Throughout The Year



Explore Your Worlds: A Journey Through The Continents



This enquiry will begin in January and will follow through until the Easter holidays. The entire school, including Year 7, will be studying a continent- one for each year group. Through this study the children can develop their skills in the areas of location, place, human and physical geography and geographical skills and fieldwork in the local environment. They will also study scientific areas such as plants and seasons and habitats, as well as recycling and pollution in that continent (or a specific country in that continent). You will see a clear flow of knowledge, skills, understanding and concepts throughout the school, with the skill sets deepening as we move up though the year groups.

The enquiry will kick off with a fun opener to grasp the children's interest. This year we will carry out a recycling craft project: Mother Earth Matters: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.' The children will have one day to create a famous landmark, building, artefact or animal from their continent study, using only recyclable materials. This is called an Entry Point and is an aspect we would like to introduce into our curriculum at the start of every theme. The task will be introduced to the children on the first school day back after the Christmas holidays. On Tuesday and Wednesday they can start planning their project, and on Thursday they have the whole day to complete it in class. On Friday we will have an assembly where each class can discuss what they have made and share their creations. They will be on display for a few weeks in the hall. We are currently exploring an Exit Point in the form of a show by a Performing Arts company based entitled ''Wow the Sea is made of Plastic'' but this is yet to be confirmed.



In these themes, children will also draw on other subject areas when suitable, in order to make connections in their learning. Certain subject areas will also continue to be taught stand alone, most notably Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy. As mentioned previously, connections will be made when appropriate.

Wellbeing is a theme which will weave through all our subject areas, as will Cultures and Celebrations (we have more than 50 nationalities at our school!). More information and developments on this will be published throughout the year.

I will keep you informed as to any new changes and look forward to seeing how the children will embrace their new learning journey.

Jenny Beket
Curriculum Leader

