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Whole School Curriculum Statement

Our curriculum puts all learners' progress at its heart.

The Woodfield Academy curriculum has been carefully designed to develop learner substantive knowledge, concepts and skills, cumulatively and coherently. The curriculum builds and expands upon the experiences of first school, as well as preparing learners well for their future. Curriculum leaders and their teams have worked collaboratively, within and between subjects, to balance breadth and depth, as mentioned in the Curriculum and Assessment Review in 2025.

Inseparable from this is our deep belief in accessibility **to** all **for** all. Thus, our curriculum is rigorous and challenging for all, designed for all to engage, participate and experience the satisfaction of being challenged (Ball and Fairlamb, 2026). It is designed with inclusion in mind, to ensure high expectations for all. In curriculum design, we ensure flexibility, so that teachers have agency to make decisions about how to adapt lessons to ensure that all learners are included and challenged. Thus, our approach to curricula, which is informed by the EEF's Guide to Inclusive Teaching (2026), enables teachers to plan lessons by asking these questions:

1. What do we do every day that is especially important for learners with additional needs?
2a. What adaptations or additional support might also be needed by some learners?
2b. How do we know that they help rather than hinder learning?

For some of our children, high quality, structured interventions are required, and opportunities for these are built into the curriculum. For a few of our learners, the curriculum looks a little different, carefully adjusted with their needs in mind – a personalised approach.

Formative assessment is an essential part of every lesson, to allow teachers agency, to reflect and make decisions to determine whether adaptations are needed, and for whom, during and between learning episodes. In lessons, teachers use a variety of strategies, to enable them to asses learners. These are drawn from a menu of circulation, use of mini white boards and ‘no hands-up’ questioning. Summative assessment points are designed to gather information about skills, concepts and

substantive knowledge development, and to allow teachers to respond to learner outcomes. Progress meetings support the implementation of the curriculum, enabling monitoring of outcomes and action planning for purposeful interventions. These are based on progression maps, which have been developed by disciplinary specialists, to help learners to understand how they are making progress, and what they need to know and be able to do next. All subjects have based this assessment around the following five attainment levels, and an assessment map for each year group has been created.:

- Emerging (Below ARE)
- Developing (ARE)
- Secure (ARE)
- Broadening (ARE+)
- Mastery

Literacy, disciplinary literacy and oracy underpin our curriculum.

Enabling children to decode language and to use it effectively and as a subject specialist is essential to us, because we know that many of our learners arrive in year 5 with significant gaps in this area. We also know that developing substantive knowledge, concepts and skills in this area 'can lay the foundations for learning and offer every child… the means to flourish and succeed in education'. (Quigley, 2026) So, it is critical that our curriculum addresses these gaps. We give a significant amount of time in our curriculum to the explicit teaching of reading, and every child accesses a carefully planned reading curriculum, which exposes them to a range of genres and high-quality works from literature. We also use rich texts in many of our subject areas, to enable disciplinary teaching of literacy (Wilshaw, 2026)

High-quality interventions, like Fresh Start, or EAL specialist teaching, are used, for identified learners.

Our medium-term plans consider:

- What does disciplinary literacy look like in this subject? (How can learners be taught to 'read like a….' 'use vocabulary like a….')

Literacy and oracy are assessed through ongoing formative means, and teachers are charged with making decisions about how to respond.

An entitlement for every learner.

Critically, our curriculum begins with ensuring the strongest foundations. In Year 5, children arrive at Woodfield with wide variations in their progress, substantive knowledge, concepts and skills. Our children are baselined during the transition

process in July, to give them the best start, by enabling teachers to plan for them, ready for September. As a result, children make rapid progress. This is an entitlement for every single child, and as such, where gaps are identified, our curriculum provides opportunities for these to be closed, via pre-teach, reteach, or other interventions. The implementation of the curriculum is then designed to ensure that gaps remain closed, that these children continue to access and don't fall behind again. The barriers are complex, and the removal of them sits at the heart of school life, and curriculum is an important element of this work.

A strong, meaningful curriculum underpins classroom practice and is critical to learner experience. For us, at Woodfield Academy, this means anchoring our approach in the accumulation of substantive knowledge, concepts and skills, in a carefully sequenced curriculum and long and medium-term plans. Subject knowledge remains central to this, and our learners are taught by subject and phase specialists, who understand the incremental steps towards progress, and plan for the removal of misconceptions to ensure that these are secured. Importantly, we are committed to the concept of 'desirable difficulties' (Bjork and Bjork, 2011) - our curriculum is designed with depth over breadth, to foster 'conditions that create challenges and slow the rate of apparent learning', so we can 'optimise long-term retention and transfer'. Our teachers have planned their curricula with this in mind. This is because we know this is essential for our learners, many of whom have significant disadvantages – in elevating their aspirations. Our curricula and lessons communicate to our learners that we believe deeply in them.

The key stone of Woodfield's curriculum is learner progress.

The key stone of our curriculum is learner progress. Analysis of the composite is important and must be achieved through consideration of progress, from parts to wholes. Each medium-term plan therefore considers the following key questions, inspired by Ruth Ashbee's "Curriculum: Theory, Culture and the Subject Specialisms":

- What does it mean to get better in this subject?
- What should learners know?
- What should learners be able to do?
- What sorts of questions should they be able to answer?
- How should they be able to make meaning?
- What do they need to prepare for the next stage?

Additionally, our medium-term plans and lessons consider the following questions, which are particularly important for our context:

- What misconceptions might exist, and how can we mitigate this, and anticipate them in our planning?
- What does disciplinary talk in this subject sound like?
- What does disciplinary literacy look like in this subject? (How can learners be taught to 'read like a….' 'use vocabulary like a….')

Curriculum teams have undertaken interdisciplinary planning. This creates coherence, enables learners to apply their knowledge in varying contexts, and further enables long-term memory development. For all, this means that our **keystone** is that of securing the foundational knowledge and skills that learners need, after we have identified the variation that exists on entry. It means achieving continuity in learner experience from first school, further developing the knowledge and skills gained there. This also means closing gaps in knowledge and skills, and undertaking a baseline assessment at the point of transition is key to us understanding our learners. Curriculum teams therefore have time built into their days to co-plan and identify any necessary adaptations to curricula, with new cohorts in mind. To achieve the **keystone of learner progress**, it's essential that this evolutionary planning is carefully considered.

Oracy is an essential part of learner progress, because from a practical teaching perspective, oracy gives us immediate insight into learner understanding. Hearing learners speak, helps identification of their misconceptions, assessment of their grasp of vocabulary, and gauging of whether they're ready to move forward — which connects directly to our work on checking for understanding and using narrated models effectively.

Guiding Principles: Curriculum Keystone and Pillars

Our curriculum teams have built their curriculum, asking 'why here? Why now'?, working alongside other phase and subject specialists, with the following guiding principles:

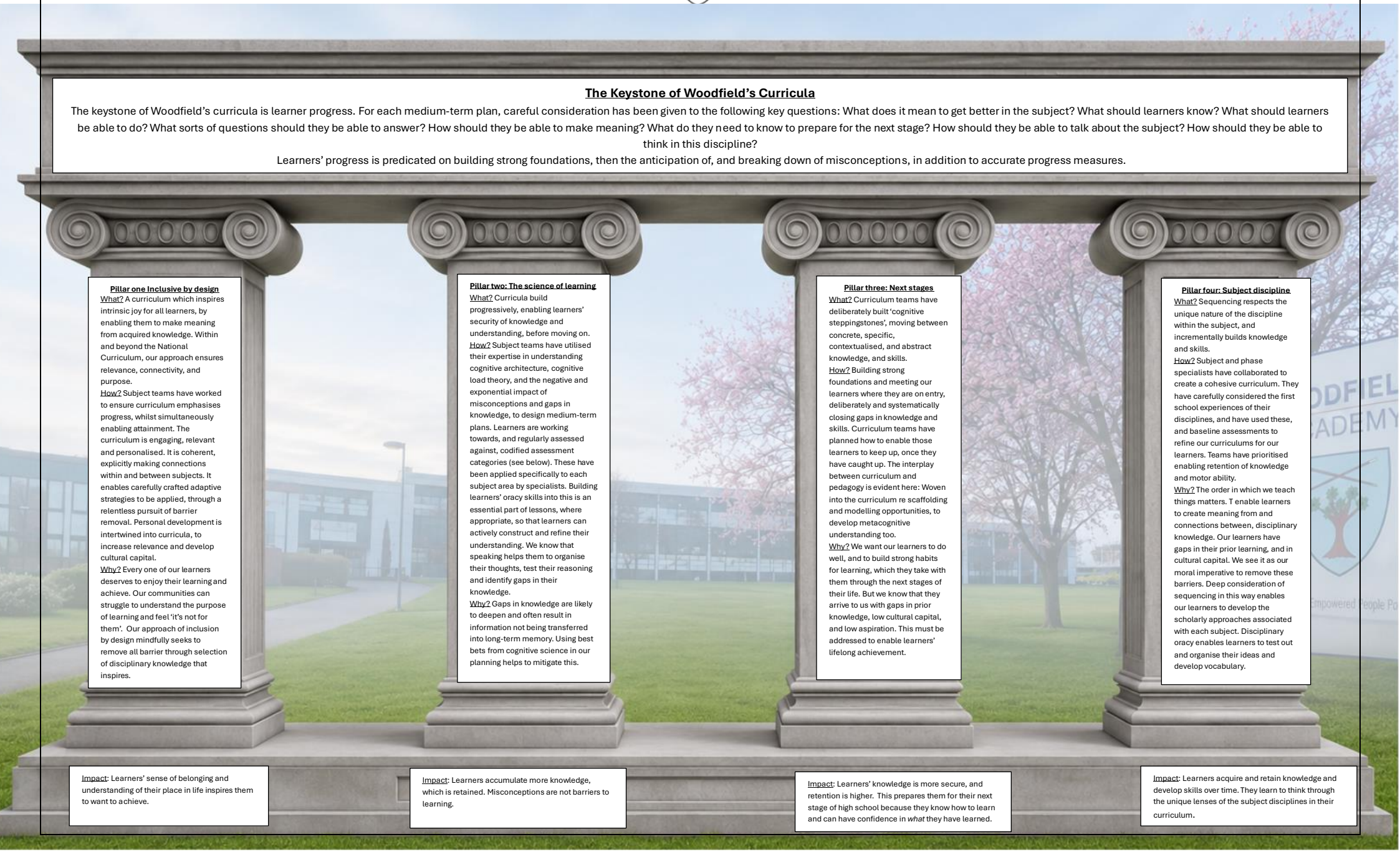
Keystone: Learner progress.

Pillar one: Inclusive by design.

Pillar two: The science of learning.

Pillar three: Next stages.

Pillar four: Subject discipline.



The Keystone of Woodfield's Curricula

The keystone of Woodfield's curricula is learner progress. For each medium-term plan, careful consideration has been given to the following key questions: What does it mean to get better in the subject? What should learners know? What should learners be able to do? What sorts of questions should they be able to answer? How should they be able to make meaning? What do they need to know to prepare for the next stage? How should they be able to talk about the subject? How should they be able to think in this discipline?

Learners' progress is predicated on building strong foundations, then the anticipation of, and breaking down of misconceptions, in addition to accurate progress measures.

Pillar one Inclusive by design

What? A curriculum which inspires intrinsic joy for all learners, by enabling them to make meaning from acquired knowledge. Within and beyond the National Curriculum, our approach ensures relevance, connectivity, and purpose.

How? Subject teams have worked to ensure curriculum emphasises progress, whilst simultaneously enabling attainment. The curriculum is engaging, relevant and personalised. It is coherent, explicitly making connections within and between subjects. It enables carefully crafted adaptive strategies to be applied, through a relentless pursuit of barrier removal. Personal development is intertwined into curricula, to increase relevance and develop cultural capital.

Why? Every one of our learners deserves to enjoy their learning and achieve. Our communities can struggle to understand the purpose of learning and feel 'it's not for them'. Our approach of inclusion by design mindfully seeks to remove all barrier through selection of disciplinary knowledge that inspires.

Impact: Learners' sense of belonging and understanding of their place in life inspires them to want to achieve.

Pillar two: The science of learning

What? Curricula build progressively, enabling learners' security of knowledge and understanding, before moving on.

How? Subject teams have utilised their expertise in understanding cognitive architecture, cognitive load theory, and the negative and exponential impact of misconceptions and gaps in knowledge, to design medium-term plans. Learners are working towards, and regularly assessed against, codified assessment categories (see below). These have been applied specifically to each subject area by specialists. Building learners' oracy skills into this is an essential part of lessons, where appropriate, so that learners can actively construct and refine their understanding. We know that speaking helps them to organise their thoughts, test their reasoning and identify gaps in their knowledge.

Why? Gaps in knowledge are likely to deepen and often result in information not being transferred into long-term memory. Using best bets from cognitive science in our planning helps to mitigate this.

Impact: Learners accumulate more knowledge, which is retained. Misconceptions are not barriers to learning.

Pillar three: Next stages

What? Curriculum teams have deliberately built 'cognitive steppingstones', moving between concrete, specific, contextualised, and abstract knowledge, and skills.

How? Building strong foundations and meeting our learners where they are on entry, deliberately and systematically closing gaps in knowledge and skills. Curriculum teams have planned how to enable those learners to keep up, once they have caught up. The interplay between curriculum and pedagogy is evident here: Woven into the curriculum re scaffolding and modelling opportunities, to develop metacognitive understanding too.

Why? We want our learners to do well, and to build strong habits for learning, which they take with them through the next stages of their life. But we know that they arrive to us with gaps in prior knowledge, low cultural capital, and low aspiration. This must be addressed to enable learners' lifelong achievement.

Impact: Learners' knowledge is more secure, and retention is higher. This prepares them for their next stage of high school because they know how to learn and can have confidence in *what* they have learned.

Pillar four: Subject discipline

What? Sequencing respects the unique nature of the discipline within the subject, and incrementally builds knowledge and skills.

How? Subject and phase specialists have collaborated to create a cohesive curriculum. They have carefully considered the first school experiences of their disciplines, and have used these, and baseline assessments to refine our curriculums for our learners. Teams have prioritised enabling retention of knowledge and motor ability.

Why? The order in which we teach things matters. T enable learners to create meaning from and connections between, disciplinary knowledge. Our learners have gaps in their prior learning, and in cultural capital. We see it as our moral imperative to remove these barriers. Deep consideration of sequencing in this way enables our learners to develop the scholarly approaches associated with each subject. Disciplinary oracy enables learners to test out and organise their ideas and develop vocabulary.

Impact: Learners acquire and retain knowledge and develop skills over time. They learn to think through the unique lenses of the subject disciplines in their curriculum.

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Removing barriers – a community minded approach

Learner progress is the keystone. But we want to go beyond this for our community. Our curriculum:

- Engages and inspires all
- Is relevant and meaningful to all
- Promotes scholarship and intrinsic joy of learning, preparing our children well for the next stages of their life.

We have taken this foundation and these pillars to create a truly unique approach, which serves our own community of learners. Ofsted research (Bold Beginnings, 2019) indicates that a curriculum that builds on learner experience, whilst broadening horizons is most effective. We are proud of the way our curriculum consciously tackles some of the prevalent barriers faced by our children. The curriculum is designed to ensure that all learners, from all backgrounds (including socio-economic) have an ambitious and accessible curriculum, which is rooted in high expectations for all. This includes fostering a sense of pride in locality and the contributions of all who live in our community. We want our learners to know about local, regional, national and global events and developments, and the interplay and connection between them. We have been inspired by the work of Lee Eliott-Major in this field:

"Belonging matters because young people are more likely to thrive, aspire and succeed when they feel supported, valued and believed in" – Elliot Eliott-Major

Where appropriate, and where it will enhance learner experience and progress, the curriculum presents material within the discipline through one of three lenses. This promotes a sense of entitlement, and belonging, through pride in heritage and conscious development of cultural capital. The children we serve are part of their community, and it is a deep understanding of this that is helping us to unblock some of the obstacles to progress and attainment.

We know our community well; we understand their challenges, their barriers, and their culture, and are determined to ensure that our ambitious curriculum is the key to enabling them to succeed. Our work to instil optimism, passion and ambition in our children is relentless, and this curriculum has been carefully crafted to serve them well. The Zooms and New Horizons enable us to weave belonging into the fabric of curriculum, and thus to better secure the attention of our learners on the content.

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Virtues are taught, caught and sought (Jubilee Centre) through our Personal Development curriculum, and enhanced through our academic one.

Zoom in Understanding our local identity. *Resilience and respect for oneself.*	**Zoom out Understanding our British identity.** *Compassion and respect for others.*	**New Horizons Understanding our global identity.** *Responsibility and respect for others and the planet.*
Enabling learners to have a knowledge of and pride in, their own locale. Developing pride in themselves. Becoming more confident in their own sense of self. Knowing their own boundaries. Development of feelings of belonging, being part of #OneWoodfield and the wider community. Representative role models from the local area, to challenge the notion that you must leave to be socially mobile.	Development of feelings of representation and tolerance. Exploration of different cultures and faiths of our learners. Exploring working class achievements and culture, including how working classes have contributed to the growth and development of Britain. Exploration of the contribution of different heritages contributing to the growth and development of Britain. Representative role models from Britain and other countries.	Understanding of global issues, like climate change, distribution of wealth and conflict. Exploration of activism and charity, as well as global role models to help learners to be optimistic problem solvers, who feel empowered to enable and facilitate change.

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Appendix: Key Research Insights

Key Mechanisms Identified

1. Challenge → Satisfaction → Progress: Rigorous, accessible challenge creates satisfaction and drives learning forward

2. Universal Practice → Targeted Adaptation: Strong everyday teaching reduces the need for extensive individual modifications

3. Literacy Competence → Subject Access → Academic Success: Developing reading, writing and oracy skills unlocks access to disciplinary knowledge and enables pupils to think and communicate like subject specialists

4. Checking Understanding → Responsive Teaching → Secure Knowledge - Regular formative assessment of substantive knowledge, concepts and skills enables teachers to adapt teaching and ensure progress for all pupils

5. Self-Efficacy → Effort → Achievement: Learners who believe they can succeed try harder and persist longer

2. Belonging → Engagement → Learning: Learners who feel they belong are more willing to take academic risks and engage deeply

3. Local Pride → Global Confidence: Understanding local significance builds confidence to engage with wider world

4. Cultural Validation → Academic Risk-Taking: When learners' backgrounds are valued, they're more willing to engage with challenging academic content

A research-informed approach to curriculum-writing

Ball and Fairlamb: Curriculum Challenge and Learner Engagement

Ball and Fairlamb's research demonstrates that learners are not only rising to the challenge of increased curriculum depth but are more engaged by it[1](https://alexfairlamb.substack.com/p/closingthecurriculumchasm). This finding directly challenges the assumption that making curriculum more demanding will disengage learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Key Findings:

Challenge Creates Engagement, Not Disengagement

Primary practitioners, initially apprehensive about high expectations, reported that learners are more engaged by the increased depth of the content[1](https://alexfairlamb.substack.com/p/closingthecurriculumchasm). This validates our approach of designing a curriculum that is rigorous and challenging for all, rather than lowering expectations for certain groups.

The Satisfaction of Being Challenged
Our curriculum is designed to ensure that all learners "engage, participate and experience the satisfaction of being challenged" (Ball and Fairlamb, 2026). This satisfaction is not incidental it is central to learner motivation and progress. When learners successfully navigate appropriately challenging content, they develop both competence and confidence.

Curriculum Continuity and Transition
Fairlamb's work focuses on closing the transition gap at KS23 through curriculum continuity (https://alexfairlamb.substack.com/p/closingthecurriculumchasm), which aligns with our emphasis on building upon first school experiences and ensuring continuity in learner experience. Our baseline assessment at transition and evolutionary planning with new cohorts in mind reflects this research base.

How Our Curriculum Applies This Research:

- ✓ High expectations for all learners, regardless of background or prior attainment
- ✓ Depth over breadth in curriculum design, allowing learners to engage meaningfully with content
- ✓ Challenging content made accessible through careful scaffolding and adaptive teaching
- ✓ Recognition that challenge, when appropriately supported, creates satisfaction and drives progress
- ✓ Transition planning that ensures continuity rather than repetition or inappropriate gaps

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF): Guide to Inclusive Teaching (2026)
The EEF's Guide to Inclusive Teaching contains advice about supporting every child to participate and succeed in school, including disadvantaged learners and those with SEND[2](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/educationevidence/inclusiveteaching). This guide has fundamentally shaped our approach to curriculum design and implementation.

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The Two-part Model of Inclusive Teaching

The guide sets out a two-part model covering universal classroom approaches and adaptations or additional support for learners who need them, including explicit instruction, feedback, scaffolding, positive relationships and calm classroom environments[3](https://www.edtechinnovationhub.com/news/eefpublishesinclusiveteachingguideasschoolsprepareinclusionstrategies)[4](https://janetgoring.substack.com/p/theeefstwopartmodelofinclusive).

Our curriculum directly embeds this model through:

1. Universal Approaches First: The guide asks: "What do we do every day that is especially important for learners with additional needs?"[5](https://paulurry68.substack.com/p/theeefsguidetoinclusiveteaching) This question is now central to our curriculum planning.

2. Thoughtful Adaptations: Effective adaptations are task specific, informed by ongoing assessment, proportionate, timely and linked to whole class planning, often increasing the intensity of high-quality teaching rather than changing the nature of the lesson[3](https://www.edtechinnovationhub.com/news/eefpublishesinclusiveteachingguideasschoolsprepareinclusionstrategies).

The Two Key Questions Framework

Our curriculum planning is informed by the EEF's framework, which we have adapted into our planning questions:

1. What do we do every day that is especially important for learners with additional needs?

2a. What adaptations or additional support might also be needed by some learners?

2b. How do we know that they help rather than hinder learning?

Key Principles from the EEF Guide:

Inclusive Teaching is Excellent Teaching

Rather than presenting inclusion as something separate from everyday teaching, inclusive teaching is excellent teaching it’s about designing learning that enables as many learners as possible to succeed from the outset[6](https://newtothepost.wordpress.com/2026/07/06/inclusiveteachingwhatthenewweefguidancemeansforschools/).

Universal Practice Reduces Need for Adaptations
Sometimes learners need something additional or different, but inclusion also depends on universal practice being consistently strong[5](https://paulurry68.substack.com/p/theeefsguidetoinclusiveteaching). Our curriculum prioritises strengthening everyday classroom practice before adding layers of adaptation.

Avoiding Unhelpful Adaptations
Poorly designed adaptations may reduce challenge and increase dependency[5](https://paulurry68.substack.com/p/theeefsguidetoinclusiveteaching). Therefore, our second question asks, "How do we know that they help rather than hinder learning?" ensuring adaptations genuinely support progress rather than creating barriers.

Implementation, Monitoring and Sustainability
Inclusive practice must be developed over time through sustained professional learning [5](https://paulurry68.substack.com/p/theeefsguidetoinclusiveteaching). Our curriculum teams have time built into their professional development calendar for ongoing refinement.

How Our Curriculum Applies This Research:
Curriculum designed with inclusion in mind from the outset, not as an afterthought
Strong universal teaching approaches that benefit all learners
Flexibility built into curriculum design so teachers can make informed adaptation decisions
Focus on removing barriers through excellent teaching rather than creating parallel curricula
Formative assessment enabling teachers to determine when and for whom adaptations are needed
Professional development supporting sustained implementation over time

Alex Quigley: Literacy Essentials for Every Teacher
Quigley's work on literacy underpins our entire approach to reading, writing, oracy and disciplinary literacy across the curriculum.

Literacy as Foundation for Flourishing
Literacy provides some of the most important challenges and solutions to learning in the classroom and beyond, with literacy development being the definitive guide to

transforming literacy outcomes[7](https://www.routledge.com/LiteracyEssentialsforEveryTeacher/Quigley/p/book/9781041072355). Our curriculum recognises that developing substantive knowledge, concepts and skills in literacy "can lay the foundations for learning and offer every child… the means to flourish and succeed in education" (Quigley, 2026).

The Literacy Challenge

Each year worrying statistics suggest that literacy is in decline, with fewer children reading daily and falling national standards for writing[7](https://www.routledge.com/LiteracyEssentialsforEveryTeacher/Quigley/p/book/9781041072355). This makes our explicit focus on literacy even more critical, particularly for our learners who arrive in Year 5 with significant gaps.

Literacy Essentials Across the Curriculum

Quigley explains the 'why' of reading, writing, talk, and vocabulary, establishing essential knowledge teachers need before offering strategies and classroom activities that can be used across the curriculum every day[7](https://www.routledge.com/LiteracyEssentialsforEveryTeacher/Quigley/p/book/9781041072355).

Key Elements from Quigley's Work:

Reading as Transformative

Our curriculum gives significant time to explicit teaching of reading, exposing learners to a range of genres and high-quality works from literature. This reflects Quigley's emphasis on reading as transformative, particularly in an era of declining reading habits.

Disciplinary Literacy

We use rich texts in many subject areas to enable disciplinary teaching of literacy. Our medium-term plans ask: "What does disciplinary literacy look like in this subject? How can learners be taught to 'read like a…' 'use vocabulary like a…'"

Oracy and Talk

Our curriculum recognises oracy as essential to learner progress. As Quigley emphasises, oracy gives immediate insight into learner understanding hearing learners speak helps identify misconceptions, assess vocabulary grasp, and gauge readiness to move forward.

Literacy Assessment
Being 'inclusive by design' means using assessments that quickly identify barriers to learning, evolving from just analysing reading ages to a more dynamic process that informs teachers how to scaffold and teach all learners to read, write, and communicate successfully[8](https://alexquigley.co.uk/buildingunderstandingaboutliteracyassessment/).

How Our Curriculum Applies This Research:

- ✓ Significant curriculum time dedicated to explicit reading instruction
- ✓ Rich texts used across subjects for disciplinary literacy development
- ✓ Oracy embedded as both a learning tool and assessment opportunity
- ✓ Vocabulary development planned systematically across subjects
- ✓ Literacy interventions (Fresh Start, EAL specialist teaching) for identified learners
- ✓ Medium-term plans explicitly addressing disciplinary literacy in each subject
- ✓ Formative assessment of literacy enabling responsive teaching

Bjork and Bjork: Desirable Difficulties and Long-term Learning

Bjork and Bjork (2011) coined the term "desirable difficulties" to describe learning conditions that make performance harder in the short term but produce better retention and transfer over time[9](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284097727_Making_things_hard_on_yourself_but_in_a_good_way_Creating_desirable_difficulties_to_enhance_learning).

The Core Principle
Bjork & Bjork describe how "optimizing learning and instruction often requires going against one's intuitions", since "the trials and errors of everyday living and learning do not seem to result in the development of an accurate mental model of the self as learner"[10](https://mirjamglessmer.com/2026/03/07/currentlyreadingbjorkbjork2011onmakingthingshardonyourselfbutinagoodwaycreatingdesirabledifficultiestoenhancelearning/).

Performance vs. Learning
Bjork's work fundamentally distinguishes between short-term performance and durable learning, arguing that conditions feeling easy, such as massed practice, typically lead to high immediate performance but weak long-term memory, so teachers should be wary

of lesson designs that prioritise immediate success over deeper processing[11](https://www.structurallearning.com/post/robertbjorkteachersguidedesirable).

Key Mechanisms:

Creating Challenge for Long-term Retention

Our curriculum is designed with depth over breadth, to foster "conditions that create challenges and slow the rate of apparent learning" so we can "optimise long-term retention and transfer" (Bjork and Bjork, 2011). This is essential for our learners, many of whom have significant disadvantages in elevating their aspirations.

Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice, or the "testing effect," is a potent desirable difficulty where the act of recalling information from memory, rather than simply restudying it, profoundly enhances its storage and future retrieval, with low stakes quizzes and self testing dramatically improving retention[11](https://www.structurallearning.com/post/robertbjorkteachersguidedesirable).

Spacing and Interleaving

Spacing, interleaving, and retrieval practice are all desirable difficulties[9](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284097727_Making_things_hard_on_yourself_but_in_a_good_way_Creating_desirable_difficulties_to_enhance_learning). Our curriculum sequences learning to incorporate these principles, ensuring learners encounter concepts multiple times in varied contexts.

How Our Curriculum Applies This Research:

- ✓ Depth over breadth in curriculum design, allowing time for deep processing
- ✓ Carefully sequenced curriculum that spaces learning over time
- ✓ Formative assessment strategies that incorporate retrieval practice
- ✓ Challenge built into lessons, with appropriate scaffolding to make it accessible
- ✓ Recognition that apparent ease of learning may not indicate long-term retention
- ✓ Planning for misconceptions and their removal to ensure secure knowledge
- ✓ Interdisciplinary planning enabling learners to apply knowledge in varying contexts

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Ruth Ashbee: Curriculum Theory and Subject Progression

Ashbee's work sets out principles of curriculum theory and provides a common framework for powerful knowledge based curriculum, exploring key elements of curriculum design including progression, sequencing, substantive and disciplinary knowledge, and the relationships of subjects to their sister disciplines[12](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/56292731curriculum).

The Core Questions

Our medium-term plans are directly inspired by Ashbee's framework, considering these key questions from "Curriculum: Theory, Culture and the Subject Specialisms":

What does it mean to get better in this subject?
What should learners know?
What should learners be able to do?
What sorts of questions should they be able to answer?
How should they be able to make meaning?
What do they need to prepare for the next stage?

Subject Disciplines as Meaning-Making Structures

Over time, our searches for meaning have developed, accumulating more knowledge and differentiating, so that today we have a myriad of lenses on the world the subject disciplines are the social, cultural, and epistemological structures we have developed over time to house, treasure, renew, and build this meaning[13](https://www.perlego.com/book/2555636/curriculumtheorycultureandthesubjectspecialismspdf).

Progression and Sequencing

Ashbee's work emphasises that progression is not simply "more difficult" but involves increasingly sophisticated ways of thinking within a discipline. Our progression maps, developed by disciplinary specialists, reflect this understanding.

Cultural Elements of Curriculum Work

Ashbee emphasises the cultural elements needed for sustained excellence in curriculum work within schools and the codification of curriculum and the multiple values of documents for curriculum thinking and execution[14](https://www.abebooks.com/9780367483777/CurriculumTheoryCultureSubjectSpecialisms0367483777/plp)[15](https://tertulia.com/book/curriculumtheorycul

tureandthesubjectspecialismsruthashbee/9780367483777). This informs our approach to curriculum documentation and the collaborative work of curriculum teams.

How Our Curriculum Applies This Research:

- ✓ Medium-term plans structured around Ashbee's key questions
- ✓ Subject specialists leading curriculum development in their disciplines
- ✓ Progression maps showing how learners develop disciplinary thinking, not just accumulate facts
- ✓ Recognition of subjects as distinct ways of making meaning from the world
- ✓ Interdisciplinary planning that respects subject boundaries while creating coherence
- ✓ Curriculum documentation that supports thinking and execution
- ✓ Time for curriculum teams to engage in sustained curriculum work

Curriculum and Assessment Review (2025): Balancing Breadth and Depth

The Curriculum and Assessment Review in 2025 emphasised the importance of balancing breadth and depth in curriculum design. This has directly influenced our curriculum development.

Key Principle: Depth Over Breadth

Our curriculum leaders and their teams have worked collaboratively, within and between subjects, to balance breadth and depth, as mentioned in the Curriculum and Assessment Review. This means making deliberate choices about what to prioritise, ensuring learners develop deep understanding rather than superficial coverage.

How Our Curriculum Applies This:

- ✓ Careful selection of content to allow time for deep engagement
- ✓ Sequencing that builds knowledge cumulatively and coherently
- ✓ Interdisciplinary planning to create breadth through connections rather than coverage
- ✓ Focus on substantive knowledge, concepts and skills that transfer
- ✓ Recognition that trying to cover everything results in learning nothing deeply

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Education Endowment Foundation: Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2

The EEF's guidance on improving literacy at KS2 provides evidence-based recommendations that directly inform our approach to literacy teaching across the curriculum.

The Challenge at KS2

Many pupils arrive at KS2 with significant gaps in their literacy development. The EEF guidance recognises that KS2 is a critical phase where pupils must consolidate foundational skills whilst developing more sophisticated reading, writing and language capabilities needed for secondary education and beyond.

Key Recommendations:

1. Prioritise Disciplinary Literacy

Pupils need to learn how to read, write and communicate like subject specialists. This means explicitly teaching the literacy demands specific to each discipline - how historians read sources differently from how scientists read reports, or how mathematicians use language with precision.

Our Curriculum Application:

- ✓ Medium-term plans explicitly address: "What does disciplinary literacy look like in this subject? How can learners be taught to 'read like a…' 'use vocabulary like a…'"
- ✓ Rich texts used across subjects to enable disciplinary teaching of literacy
- ✓ Subject-specific vocabulary and language structures taught explicitly

2. Develop Reading Comprehension Strategies

Effective reading comprehension requires explicit teaching of strategies, not just exposure to texts. Pupils need to be taught how to monitor their understanding, make inferences, and engage critically with what they read.

Our Curriculum Application:

- ✓ Significant curriculum time dedicated to explicit reading instruction
- ✓ Carefully planned reading curriculum exposing pupils to range of genres and high-quality literature
- ✓ Teaching of comprehension strategies across subjects, not just in English lessons

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3. Support Struggling Readers with Targeted Interventions

Some pupils require additional, structured support to catch up with their peers. High-quality interventions should be timely, targeted and evidence-based.

Our Curriculum Application:

- ✓ Fresh Start intervention for identified learners
- ✓ EAL specialist teaching for pupils learning English
- ✓ Baseline assessment at transition enabling early identification of needs
- ✓ Curriculum designed to ensure gaps remain closed once addressed

4. Teach Writing Composition Explicitly

Writing is a complex skill requiring explicit instruction in planning, drafting, editing and refining. Pupils benefit from clear models, structured practice and specific feedback.

Our Curriculum Application:

- ✓ Literacy taught explicitly across the curriculum
- ✓ Disciplinary writing taught in subject contexts
- ✓ Formative assessment enabling responsive teaching of writing

5. Develop Pupils' Language Capabilities

Oral language development underpins reading and writing. Pupils need rich vocabulary, understanding of grammar and opportunities for structured talk.

Our Curriculum Application:

- ✓ Oracy embedded as essential part of learner progress
- ✓ Oracy provides immediate insight into pupil understanding
- ✓ Medium-term plans consider: "What does disciplinary talk in this subject sound like?"
- ✓ Formative assessment strategies include questioning and talk to check understanding

6. Use Assessment to Support Learning

Ongoing formative assessment should inform teaching decisions, helping teachers identify what pupils know and can do, and what they need to learn next.

Our Curriculum Application:

- ✓ Formative assessment essential part of every lesson
- ✓ Teachers use circulation, mini-whiteboards and no hands-up questioning

- ✓ Literacy and oracy assessed through ongoing formative means
- ✓ Teachers make responsive decisions based on assessment intelligence

Integration with Our Context

The EEF literacy guidance is particularly relevant for our context. We know that many of our learners arrive in Year 5 with significant gaps in literacy. The guidance validates our approach of:

- ✓ Giving significant curriculum time to explicit literacy teaching
- ✓ Providing high-quality interventions for identified pupils
- ✓ Embedding literacy across all subjects through disciplinary approaches
- ✓ Using formative assessment to identify and respond to needs
- ✓ Recognising oracy as foundational to literacy development

Literacy as Gateway to Progress

The EEF guidance reinforces our belief that developing substantive knowledge, concepts and skills in literacy "can lay the foundations for learning and offer every child… the means to flourish and succeed in education" (Quigley, 2026). Without strong literacy, pupils cannot access the full curriculum or demonstrate their understanding effectively.

How Our Curriculum Applies This Research:

- ✓ Explicit, systematic literacy teaching across KS2
- ✓ Disciplinary literacy embedded in all subjects
- ✓ Evidence-based interventions (Fresh Start, EAL support) for pupils who need them
- ✓ Oracy development as foundation for reading and writing
- ✓ Rich texts and high-quality literature throughout curriculum
- ✓ Formative assessment driving responsive literacy teaching
- ✓ Recognition that closing literacy gaps is essential to closing attainment gaps

Jubilee Centre: Character Education Through Virtues

The Jubilee Centre's framework of virtues being "taught, caught and sought" underpins our Personal Development curriculum and is enhanced through our academic curriculum.

The Three-part Model

Taught: Virtues are explicitly taught through our Personal Development curriculum

Caught: Virtues are modelled and experienced through school culture and relationships
Sought: Learners are encouraged to actively pursue virtuous behaviour

Connection to Our Zoom Framework
Our three lenses (Zoom In, Zoom Out, New Horizons) deliberately connect to virtue development:
Zoom In (Local Identity) → Resilience and respect for oneself
Zoom Out (British Identity) → Compassion and respect for others
New Horizons (Global Identity) → Responsibility and respect for others and the planet

How Our Curriculum Applies This Research:
Virtues explicitly taught through Personal Development curriculum
Academic curriculum designed to provide opportunities to develop and demonstrate virtues
School culture (#OneWoodfield) creating environment where virtues are caught
Learners encouraged to seek virtuous behaviour through role models and examples
Integration of character education with academic learning, not as separate strand

Ofsted: Bold Beginnings (2019) Building on Experience While Broadening Horizons

Ofsted research indicates that a curriculum that builds on learner experience, whilst broadening horizons is most effective. This principle is fundamental to our approach.

Key Finding:
A curriculum is most effective when it:
1. Builds on what learners already know and have experienced
2. Broadens their horizons beyond their immediate experience
3. Maintains high expectations for all

How Our Curriculum Applies This:

Building on Experience:
Baseline assessment at transition to understand what learners bring
Local content that connects to learners' lived experience
Recognition and validation of diverse heritage and backgrounds
Starting points that acknowledge learners' existing knowledge

Broadening Horizons:
Zoom In → Zoom Out → New Horizons framework
Local content as gateway to national and global understanding
Exposure to high-quality literature and rich texts
Representative role models from local, national and global contexts
Understanding of how local connects to global (e.g., Redditch needles to world trade)

Maintaining High Expectations:
Rigorous and challenging curriculum for all
Depth of content that respects learners' capacity to engage with complex ideas
Refusal to lower expectations based on background or prior attainment

Lee Eliott-Major: Social Mobility and Community-Based Curriculum

The curriculum is inspired by a deep knowledge of our learners and community, and the research selected as a basis for the curriculum is deliberate. Lee Eliott-Major's work has been instrumental in design of the curriculum framework and individual schemes of learning, as the information below indicates.

"Escape vs. Stay and Improve" Narratives

Eliott-Major's Key Finding: Traditional social mobility approaches encourage learners to "escape" their communities, but this creates identity conflicts and doesn't address systemic inequalities.
How our curriculum aligns:

- ✓ Redditch as a place of opportunity - showing IBM, modern manufacturing, historical innovation.
- ✓ Local success stories from needle makers to modern engineers, demonstrating achievement within the community
- ✓ Heritage pride - celebrating what Redditch has contributed to the world rather than what learners need to escape from
- ✓ Future ambitions rooted locally -"How can I contribute to making Redditch even better?" rather than "How can I leave Redditch?"

Working Class Cultural Assets
Eliott-Major's Research: Working-class communities possess significant cultural wealth, resilience, community solidarity, practical problem-solving, strong work ethic.

Our curriculum examples:

- ✓ Industrial heritage celebrating working-class innovation - needle makers, canal workers, manufacturing excellence.
- ✓ Community resilience themes: how Redditch adapted from Roman times through industrial changes to modern economy.
- ✓ Practical problem-solving: materials science connecting to manufacturing, D&T linking to local engineering.
- ✓ Collective achievement: Romans, Christians, industrial workers all building community together.

"People Like Me" Success Models

Eliott-Major's Finding: Learners need to see people from similar backgrounds achieving success, not just distant aspirational figures.

Our curriculum approach:

- ✓ Local Christian figures showing resilience: connecting to learners' heritage countries but also local community
- ✓ Historical working-class success: needle makers who built world-famous industry
- ✓ Modern local examples: IBM workers, manufacturing engineers, local artists
- ✓ Geographical comparisons: Silesia and Pittsburgh showing similar communities achieving success

Cultural Capital Without Cultural Replacement

Eliott-Major's Argument: Schools should develop learners' cultural capital while validating their existing cultural knowledge, not replacing it.

Our Curriculum Achieves This:

- ✓ Academic subjects with local content: rigorous geography, history, science using Redditch examples
- ✓ Expanding horizons through local lens: Roman Empire studied through Icknield Street, global trade through local needle exports
- ✓ Heritage connections: acknowledging learners' diverse backgrounds while building shared local identity
- ✓ High expectations rooted in local pride: "Redditch has always produced excellence, and so can you"

Accessible Pathways to Success

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Eliott-Major's Research: Learners need to believe that success pathways are accessible to them, not just theoretically available.

Our Curriculum Evidence:

- ✓ Local companies as real opportunities: IBM, Codemasters, modern manufacturing showing career paths
- ✓ Historical progression: showing how communities can reinvent themselves (agricultural → industrial → technological)
- ✓ Skills connecting to local economy: computing, D&T, science all linking to actual local employment
- ✓ Community belonging as strength: diverse heritage as asset, local knowledge as foundation

Challenging Deficit Narratives

Eliott-Major's Key Point: Working-class communities are often portrayed as lacking aspiration or cultural knowledge, but research shows this is false.

Our Curriculum Counternarrative:

- ✓ Redditch as globally significant: Roman roads, world-famous needles, modern technology
- ✓ Local landscape inspiring great art: Elgar and the Malvern Hills
- ✓ Innovation- tradition, from Roman engineering to modern electronics
- ✓ Cultural diversity as strength: multiple heritage traditions enriching community

Social Mobility Through Community Investment

Eliott-Major's Vision: True social mobility involves improving opportunities within communities, not just helping individuals escape them.

Our Curriculum's Long-term Impact:

- ✓ Learners as future community leaders equipped with knowledge, pride, and skills to contribute locally
- ✓ Understanding global connections, seeing how local success connects to wider networks
- ✓ Civic engagement, caring about local heritage and future development
- ✓ Economic development, learners prepared for local industries while understanding their global significance

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Integration of Research into Practice

Our curriculum is not simply informed by research; It is built upon the integration of these evidence-based principles:

1. From Lee Elliot Eliott-Major: Community-based approach that validates working-class culture while building cultural capital
2. From Ball and Fairlamb: Confidence that challenge engages rather than alienates learners
3. From EEF: Two-part model ensuring strong universal teaching with thoughtful adaptations
4. From Quigley: Recognition of literacy as foundation for all learning
5. From Bjork and Bjork: Depth over breadth, with desirable difficulties for long-term retention
6. From Ashbee: Subject-specific progression and disciplinary thinking
7. From Curriculum Review: Deliberate balance of breadth and depth
8. From Jubilee Centre: Character development integrated with academic learning
9. From Ofsted: Building on experience while broadening horizons

These research bases work together to create a curriculum that is:

- ✓ Rigorous and challenging for all learners
- ✓ Accessible and inclusive by design
- ✓ Rooted in community while opening global horizons
- ✓ Focused on progress through carefully sequenced, deep learning
- ✓ Literacy rich across all subjects
- ✓ Character-building through academic and personal development
- ✓ Evidence-informed in both design and implementation

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