

School's approaches to teaching and learning are based on educational research (Hattie's Meta-analysis of effect sizes and various research projects evaluated by the Educational Endowment Foundation) as well as action research conducted across a number of local institutions both within Tudhoe Learning Trust and beyond.

Teaching style

During morning sessions, focusing on reading, writing and mathematics skills, the predominant teaching style is direct teaching whereby clear objectives and success criteria are set. Instruction, including modelling and explanation, is used in order for new skills to be taught, practised and applied. For afternoon lessons a greater range of interactive teaching approaches and practical experiences are used. In order for children to acquire, practise and apply new skills, knowledge and understanding over time, concepts and skills are taught in sequential teaching blocks with a series of lessons making up the block.

Teaching blocks

At Stephenson Way all subjects, key concepts and aspects are taught in discrete blocks. For example children may learn about an aspect of history for 2 weeks before moving to a different curriculum subject, or focus on non-chronological report writing for a fortnight before moving onto another aspect of writing. Throughout each teaching block, assessment is on-going and intervention is used regularly to prevent children from falling behind.

Deployment of adults to support learning and provide intervention

All adults are deployed to work directly with children and support learning during morning sessions, focusing on reading, writing and mathematics. As a result children work in small, homogenous class groups where children of similar ability are taught skills that are matched to their current needs. Class groups are not permanent and change depending on the outcome of tests, pre-learning needs or how well the children are progressing within a sequence of lessons. If a child or group of children are at risk of falling behind or require intervention to accelerate their progress then this occurs during afternoon sessions, usually away from the main class (activity). Children with short SEN plans also receive small group or 1-1 intervention during afternoon sessions.

Assessment approach

As a school we use a 3 level system for assessment, which incorporates long term (termly or half termly), medium term (fortnightly or weekly) and short term (daily or by lesson/activity) approaches. Within each level a range of assessment procedures are used. These include tests, screeners or checks (long term), on-going mini tests and "cold" tasks (medium term) and daily marking and feedback (short term) strategies. Tests, checks and screeners are used to inform teaching and learning and demonstrate pupil progress over time. Gaps in learning are identified through termly or half termly testing and pre-learning goals and targets are set to ensure children make clear progress within given timeframes.

Test scores are tracked carefully and children's progress is discussed within teaching teams. Testing feeds into overall judgements on achievement, with children aiming to reach the expected standard "Gold Level" within our assessment system before moving on to the higher "Purple level".

"Cold" tasks are used to inform teacher planning and delivery on a weekly basis. In writing children are given unseen tasks before they commence teaching blocks. The tasks contain the elements that they will be learning over the duration of a block. Teachers can then use the outcome of the cold task to plan work matched to need. Progress is also measured by comparing cold tasks and end of block application tasks. Progress stamps are also used when teachers are marking away from the children.

During a block, children receive regular feedback to respond to. Feedback is based on assessment of need. Marking and feedback, generally has one or more of the following aims: to encourage (self) correction; to refine understanding (by addressing misconceptions or misunderstandings); to stretch and broaden understanding; or to deepen understanding. In addition to written feedback, children are informed of their progress through the use of "hot marking" (marking with children) and verbal feedback during lessons.

If any element of the assessment system shows that a child is at risk of falling behind then intervention and support are assigned.