

Guiding principles for school initiative

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play a major part in our school and have for the past seven years. The curriculum is built on four pillars, the first being the National Curriculum. The second is a framework of dispositions, skills, qualities that we hope to develop in our pupils, and we call **'Rounded and Grounded'**. That draws on the work of [Guy Claxton](#).

The third pillar is provided by the SDGs, and the fourth is based on the **Rights of the Child**.

The four pillars have equal weighting and value in our school and are considered through a **'Belonging Lens'**, by which I mean ..

- ❖ Can our children see themselves in our curriculum?
- ❖ Can they see other people from the community, local and global?

Guy Claxton's 4 Rs' ...

Resilience: 'being ready, willing and able to look on to learning'. Being able to stick with difficulty and cope with feelings such as fear and frustration.

Resourcefulness: 'being ready, willing and able to learn in different ways'. Having a variety of learning strategies and knowing when to use them.

Reflection: 'being ready, willing and able to become more strategic about learning'. Getting to know our own strengths and weaknesses.

Relationships: 'being ready, willing and able to learn alone and with others'.

The spur to engage pedagogically with the SDGs came when four of us from the school, our office manager, two classroom teachers and myself, attended a weekend conference organised by [Ashoka](#) and [Routes to Resilience](#).

We were ready to make sweeping personal changes, and to consider what the implications were for our professional practice.

On reflection, the curriculum we had developed up to then, which we designed to give our children agency through the opportunity to create change through projects with explicit outcomes, I now think was, perhaps, inauthentic and superficial.

However, it did put us in a position, when we identified what we felt was important, to be able to **challenge ourselves ... and then our children to be agents of change**.

The fact that there were four of us involved was important. Trying to do something similar as an individual in a school would be extremely difficult.

The SDGs provide a useful framework for curriculum review.

Though they are in the public domain, not everyone, and certainly not all Heads, seem to be aware of them. There have been occasions when I have spoken about the SDGs and the reaction from some colleagues, not from our school I might add, has made me think, *"They think I'm talking about STDs"*.

The SDGs may not be an educational tool but what do effective teachers do? **They take a concept, a framework and adapt it to support their practice and enhance their pupils' learning.**

Our approach to teaching and learning is project-based and goes beyond 'topic' and beyond 'theme'. It is knowledge-rich and supports the application of that knowledge to a real-life context.

We've worked with [Tim Taylor](#) to employ Dorothy Heathcote's drama-inspired [The Mantle of the Expert](#) to, for example, explore the issues surrounding hedgerow removal and develop some emotional involvement with the **pupils becoming "bothered"**.



Hedgerow Removal

Supporting pupils to understand and become bothered about

- ☐ Why would a farmer wish to sell a field?
- ☐ How might local residents react?
- ☐ Why might a property developer want to remove an ancient hedgerow?
- ☐ How valuable is an ancient hedgerow?
- ☐ What would be the impact of removing the hedgerow?
- ☐ What would be the possible outcomes for all involved (human, flora and fauna)?
- ☐ How they can influence, say, a local development?
- ☐ What differences can they make in their world?

Our spiral curriculum ensures that we address the content outlined in the National Curriculum and that we can plan for progression.

Barrowford's 12-Week Spring Term Project-Based Spiral

Yr6 How special is our planet?

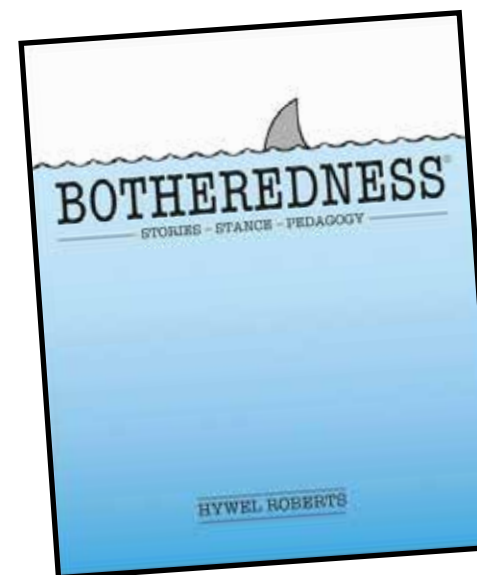
Yr5 Should we save the rainforest?

EY/R What changes happen in Spring?

Yr1 How is China different to the UK?

Yr2 Are oceans sustainable?

Yr3 Did ancient people treat the planet more kindly than us?



Our efforts at curriculum development have been supported by [Hywel Roberts](#) and [Debra Kidd](#). For example, Hywel's '*Oops, Helping Kids Learn Accidentally*' ... as opposed to making kids jump through hoops. And more recently his book '*Botheredness*'.

I see hope as being an integral element to my role as a head. Without hope, how can we provide children with knowledge and skills needed to drive change towards a more sustainable future?

If you're not hopeful, that must lead to increased anxiety for the children. There's a lot of evidence that children are anxious about the future, theirs and the environment's.

"... anxiousness among both primary and secondary-age pupils appears to have increased and is higher than in 2020/21". Government Report [p13]

['State of the nation 2022: children & young people's wellbeing'](#)

It is our job to be hopeful so that they are hopeful about their agency, their knowledge and abilities impacting positively on the world around them. For example, we're a Reward-Free, Sanction-Free school and that involves taking responsibility for your own actions, and that agency.

I know that much of what I've said may seem like a second-language to some because the notion of a '**knowledge rich curriculum**' is at the very **forefront of current educational practice and thought**, but not only am I hopeful about the children, about our school, but also about what should and could happen educationally in the future.

Routes to resilience ...

Within the hearts and minds
of young people
lies a hunger for change.

