

Curriculum concepts and classroom activities

Introduction and summary

'What's the big idea?' This a key question in curriculum planning – what are the essential generalisations we intend to present and to communicate, the key concepts we want learners to understand and make their own? In this paper there are notes on six sets of big ideas, as listed below. The ideas are connected to each other and overlap but can be separated and given names, for the sake of convenience. They are as follows:

- Shared humanity
- Identity, belonging and difference
- Globalisation and the global village
- Learning from other places and times
- Conflict resolution and justice
- Open and closed minds.

These ideas can be taught in all subjects and at all ages. Further, they can be taught through a school's general ethos and atmosphere, not just formally and directly through what used to be called chalk and talk. Also, they can be taught through the illustrative material to which reference is made in skills-based subjects.

After discussion of the six key ideas, there are descriptions of possible classroom activities, roughly sorted according to the subjects of the national curriculum.

1) Shared humanity

Human beings belong to a single race, the human race. At all times in history and in all cultural traditions, they have had, and continue to have, certain basic tasks, problems, aspirations and needs in common – there is a shared humanity. Because all have the same underlying humanity, all are of equal value. All should be treated fairly and all should have the same basic human rights.

Art, drama, history, music, novels, poetry, religion and stories all explore humankind's basic humanity. In science, pupils learn about aspects of human biology that are universal, about universals in the inorganic world and about science as a universal human activity. Universals in biology are also encountered in health education and PE. In geography, pupils learn about recurring patterns in relationships between human beings and their physical environment.

2) Identity, belonging and difference

To be human is to be rooted in a particular time and place and therefore to be different from most other people. The principal differences are to do with age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, nation, race, religion, sexuality and status. They are expressed through different perceptions, narratives, interests, standpoints and customs. Every individual belongs to a range of different groups, and therefore has a range of different belongings. Also, and partly in consequence, all individuals change and develop over time, as do all cultures, groups and communities.

In all subjects, the texts, visual material and electronic resources can reflect the reality that there are many different ways of being human and that cultural identities are continually developing. Similarly the tasks, problems and assignments that are set can reflect these aspects of the real world. In many subjects, in addition, there are direct

opportunities for teaching and learning about cultural differences, and differences of perception, interpretation, interest and narrative.

3) Globalisation and the global village

Countries, cultures and communities are not cut off from each other. On the contrary, there has been much borrowing, mingling and mutual influence over the centuries between different countries and cultural traditions. Events and trends in one place in the modern world are frequently affected by events and trends elsewhere. You cannot understand your own local world close at hand without seeing it as part of a global system. The global system has a range of interacting sub-systems: ecological, cultural, economic and political. There are benefits, but also dangers and difficulties.

Economic interdependence is an essential concept in geography. Ecological interdependence is fundamental in biology, chemistry and physics. Political interdependence is central in all studies of causation in history. Cultural interdependence, involving fusion, cross-over and mutual influences and borrowing, is a recurring feature in art, design, drama, literature, music and technology.

4) Learning from other places and times

Examples of high achievement are to be found in a wide range cultures, societies and traditions, not in 'the west' or in modern times only. They are the work of both women and men, of gay people as well as straight, and of disabled people as well as non-disabled. They are to be found in all areas of human endeavour – the arts and sciences, law and ethics, personal and family life, religion and spirituality, moral and physical courage, invention, politics, imagination.

In every subject, examples of achievement, invention, creativity, insight and heroism can be taken from a wide range of cultures, both in the present and in the past.

5) Conflict resolution and justice

In all societies and situations – including families, schools, villages, nations, the world – there are disagreements and conflicts of interest. In consequence there is a never-ending need to construct, and to keep in good repair, non-violent ways of dealing with conflict – rules, laws, customs and systems that all people accept as reasonable and fair.

It is particularly in history, PSHEE and citizenship education that social and political concepts to do with conflict resolution and justice are taught and developed directly. Indirectly, they can be a dimension in all subjects, particularly literature and stories and the creative and performing arts.

6) Open and closed minds

All advances of knowledge and substantial achievements require a readiness to review and examine assumptions, expectations and perceptions that may be false or distorted. Such assumptions may be about the inherent superiority of one's own country, culture or ethnicity; the inherent superiority of either women or men; sexuality; disability; people of one's own generation; or the period of history in which one happens to live. The avoidance of stereotypes and unexamined beliefs, accompanied by keeping one's mind open to new information, evidence and points of view, is a constant struggle.

It is particularly in history, PSHEE and citizenship education that social and political concepts to do with prejudice and open-mindedness are taught and developed directly. Indirectly, they can be a dimension in all subjects, particularly literature and stories and the creative and performing arts. In science, technology and mathematics there is constant emphasis on attention to hard evidence and on the rigorous testing of hypotheses.

Classroom activities

ART

Who, what and where are we?

Learners answer various kinds of questionnaire about their personal interests, and in this way reflect on their own identities, cultural roots and personal qualities, and their experiences of belonging and exclusion. They then administer the same or similar questionnaires to others as part of a survey, and present their findings and personal thoughts through collages, artefacts, installations, e-zines, video diaries, powerpoint or interactive web pages.

Identities

In groups learners research concepts of identity, belonging and community, using a range of sources of information, including the Britkids website. Each group feeds back to the rest of the class and discuss what they have found out and discuss diversity in Britain in the twenty-first century. Finally, each imagines identity as a mask that reflects aspects of heritage or community, and each learner designs and creates a mask to reflect their various loyalties and affiliations.

Posters

Learners examine and discuss a collection of posters and publicity material on themes such as sustainable development, equal opportunities, respect for people who are disabled, combating homophobia, racial justice and human rights. They establish criteria for evaluation of such posters with regard to colour, composition, shape, font and format in the lettering register of language, and images and assumptions relating to people and situations. They then design and create their own posters and display these in public spaces within their school and the local neighbourhood.

Fusion

Learners study the principal international influences on artists whose work is currently on show at a local gallery and the ways their work represents fusion of a range of traditions, cultures and genres. Learners then create their own work, similarly drawing on a range of genres and traditions.

CITIZENSHIP

Have your say

Learners study differing accounts of the same event, for example the differences between a report on the website of BBC News and reports in various tabloids. What is fact and what is fiction? What language is used? Is there an attempt to present balanced arguments? Are ideas presented as clear-cut, or can you see that even people directly involved are uncertain? Whose voice do you hear through the report? Does the report tell you what to think, or are you presented with evidence that helps you make up your own mind? Does the report reinforce readers' prejudices, or does it challenge them? If the report is recent, they send their own comments to the editor, or to else submit them to the paper's *Have Your Say* section on its website.

Supporting and assisting people in need

Learners are given, or they themselves raise, a sum of money. Alternatively, they use imaginary money. They are also given descriptions of a range of charitable projects and decide how to allocate their real or imaginary money between them. More elaborately they can role-play the discussions, with different individuals or groups taking on different advocacy roles. Instead or as well, they make visits to, or receive visits from, real projects.

Looking ahead

Learners look at a selection of today's national newspapers, either the print editions or those online, or this week's local papers; or at the most recently published statement of the central government's legislative intentions ('the Queen's Speech'); or at the

legislative intentions of the Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly. They discuss these and decide which of the issues they would like to influence, if they possibly can. They learn how to write letters, faxes or email messages to their own elected representatives; send various messages; and keep a record of the answers they receive.

Not easy being British

Working in small groups, young people answer questions of the kind that are asked in citizenship tests. How relevant do they consider the questions to be? If a question appears irrelevant can they nevertheless guess why it was asked? What suggestions do they have for questions that are more relevant? More specifically, can they come up with questions which are more appropriate for people such as themselves? They then go on to discuss concepts of Britishness and national identity and to compare their own views with those of others.

Headteacher from hell

Learners imagine their school gets a new headteacher, and he or she is capricious, unreasonable, unpredictable, insensitive and rude, and very, very cruel. Senior staff leave or are fired and replaced by staff similar to the new principal. Students describe the features of the school under its new management, and give accounts of things that have happened. (Some of these, perhaps, are drawn from reading about King John, or a prison diary such as *Enemy Combatant: the terrifying true story of a Briton in Guantanamo* by Moazzam Begg, 2006; or Part 8 of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*, 1994). In groups, they draft a charter of rights they want the principal to sign. In connection with it they design a publicity campaign, complete with logos, straplines, slogans, posters, lapel badges and posters.

Equal opps

In simulation or reality, learners are involved in the appointment of a new member of staff at their school. They devise a job description and person specification and use these when shortlisting; they then draw up a set of questions to be asked at interview, and procedures to be adopted; they conduct the interviews and after their decision give feedback to the candidates who were unsuccessful. Throughout the process they are mindful of good practice in relation to legislation regarding age, disability, ethnicity, faith, gender and sexuality.

ENGLISH

Journeys

Using a resource such as *The Journey* by Marcia Hutchinson learners conduct interviews with people who took part in a major journey (from another country to UK, or from one part of UK to another) in their youth and construct pieces of prose which tell their stories. They include expectations before the journey began; things that happened on the way; initial feelings on arrival; and tasks of settling down and developing a sense of belonging.

Identity and struggle

Learners read and study the stories for teenagers in *Walking a Tightrope* edited by Rehana Ahmed and comment in various genres of writing, and in various oral styles, on character, setting and mood; author perspective and voice; significant detail; starting and finishing; and creativity in language and narrative. They then write similar stories themselves.

Book festival

Using the collections from booksellers about disability, homophobia, antiracism or cultural diversity, or of books especially likely to be of interest to boys, learners write reviews and give talks; write to the authors; and take part in a mini literature festival at which awards are made to the books considered best.

The best words in the best order

Students role-play the drafting sub-committee which (it is imagined) produced the final version to which King John agreed on 15 June 1215. The basis for their deliberations is a draft created by two of their members. This could be a literal translation

(<http://www.constitution.org/eng/magnacar.htm>), or else in age-appropriate modern English. The committee is chaired by Archbishop Stephen Langton and the two members defending their draft are Peter Fitz Herbert and Hubert De Burgh. Also present are Jocelyn of Bath and Glastonbury, who is a devout Christian; Hugh of Lincoln, a socialist; Alan of Galloway, a nit-picking pedant; and Philip d'Aubigny, bitterly opposed to political correctness.

GEOGRAPHY

Sustainable development

Taking ideas from the pack *Live well, live wisely* published by the Intermediate Technology Development Group, learners study the concept of sustainability throughout the world; research recycling and waste collection activities in their own locality; and compare and contrast projects in their local neighbourhood with projects elsewhere. They then design and model a waste collection point that could be set up in their own school, and an awareness-raising and publicity campaign to encourage other learners – and all staff – to use it.

Eco-schools

Learners visit the websites of eco-schools around the world and draw up action plans for similar projects in their own school. Instead or as well they role-play a committee which makes grants visit the sites of other winners throughout the world and decide which they consider best.

Behind the logo

Learners investigate how the British public is implicated in exploitation of workers – usually females – in producing goods and services. (See, for example, *Looking behind the Logo* and *Trading Away Our Rights: women working in global supply chains*, both published by Oxfam.)

Grameen Project

Learners investigate the work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to support women's projects, and Fairtrade initiatives to support women to become self-sufficient. Within this context they examine the success of the Grameen Bank which was the 2006 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, along with its founder Muhammed Yunus. Ninety-six per cent of the poorest people funded by Grameen Bank are women.

HISTORY

National identity

Learners create and illustrate time-lines showing relationships over the centuries between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, noting different perspectives and stories in the four nations at different times, and in different social classes, and the impact of urbanisation and the Empire. They investigate current views of British identity and of how it is changing.

Local neighbourhood and community

Learners study ways in which their local area has changed over the course of time. They investigate education, houses and housing, migration and movement to the area from overseas and other parts of the UK; the building of factories; markets; religious observance; treatment of the poor and care of the sick; law and order; sport, leisure and the impact of national and international events and developments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Evaluation of websites

Learners evaluate a range of websites about equality and diversity issues, considering features of style, navigation and content. They use this information to plan and design their own website about racial justice and cultural diversity for a particular audience. They produce a project plan, breaking down work into a series of smaller tasks. In their work they consider efficiency, fitness for purpose and audience needs. For example, they

might use ICT to convert and compress graphic files to allow faster download times. They make informed use of automated features in software to create a navigational menu on each page. Where appropriate, they integrate applications. For example, they may include a response form on their site, to collect information from users. They test and refine their site using the school intranet.

Visits to museums and exhibitions

Learners plan a real or imaginary day trip to a museum specialising in issues of cultural diversity and equality, for example the Museum of the British Empire and Commonwealth at Bristol. They use the internet and paper-based materials to find out the entry fees and use route-finding software to determine the distance. They then enter this data into a spreadsheet model prepared in collaboration with the teacher and add data on cost of transport. They use the model to establish the cost per learner. The teacher then provides a number of possible scenarios, for example an increase in the number of learners, and learners explore the model to provide answers. Groups make presentations to the rest of the class about their preferred destinations.

Campaigning for justice

Working in pairs, learners create a web page about a particularly important movement, campaign or personality in the development of greater equality and justice. They need to research the subject and then to write a short introduction identifying key facts and concepts, for example, Who? What? When? Where? Why? They also find or create between one and three images that can be scanned in to illustrate their text.

MATHEMATICS

Global village

Learners work with the picture book *If the World were a Village* by David Smith (details in bibliography) and present the same statistical data in alternative forms. The topics include nationalities, languages, ages, religions, air and water, schooling and literacy, money and possessions, electricity, food, and past and present. There are many classroom activities suggested at acblack.com/globalvillage

Identities, belongings and statistics

Learners work with data and materials at the Census at School website, based at Nottingham Trent University (www.censusatschool.ntu.ac.uk). There are questionnaires for them to fill in, downloadable worksheets, an interactive histogram, a poem, a song, factsheets about the 2001 census of population, and a wealth of activities integrating statistical analysis with geography, history, science, ICT and citizenship. There are sister sites in Canada, New Zealand, Queensland and South Australia.

Demography

Learners use from data published by the Office of National Statistics relating to the 2001 census of population and construct, on paper and using ICT, a range of graphs and charts and identify which styles of numerical representation are most suitable for various purposes and contexts. They then present concise, reasoned arguments, using symbols, diagrams, graphs and related explanatory text. They engage in similar tasks using data from the Women and Work Commission and factsheets issued by the former Equal Opportunities Commission.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Sign language

Learners are introduced to British Sign Language. They learn basic conversational phrases, and appreciate BSL's grammatical features and structures. They practise with DVDs and various specialist websites, and meet and converse with Deaf people and BSL translators. They may compare and contrast BSL with American Sign Language.

Induction course

An induction course in modern foreign languages is taught before focusing on one language in particular. There is an emphasis on transferable language-learning skills and on

awareness of the ways in which languages work. Learners explore the relationships between different languages, including links between Asian and European languages, and the cultural and social contexts in which language is used.

Timeline

Learners create a timeline showing the arrival of various new words in English from other languages over the centuries, including words originally coined in America and other English-speaking countries and now part of world English.

On va visiter la Côte d'Ivoire

Learners go on an imaginary trip to a Francophone country: *Nous allons visiter la Suisse/La Martinique/ le Canada/ la Côte d'Ivoire. C'est une bonne idée? Qui a un passeport?* Real timetables are used, to revise telling the time, and there is talk about how long it takes to get to a place. Each learner makes their own 'passport' with relevant details and writes a personal biography based on the book *L'Histoire de Ma Vie* by Ulfet Mahmoud and Alan Thompson, published by Mantra Books. In an imaginary airport waiting room the flight is announced (*Air France annonce le vol 345 à destination Montréal. Les passagers sont priés de se rendre à la porte numéro 6*) and once inside the 'aircraft' the teacher takes the role of flight attendant and acts out simplified safety precautions. Scrapbooks and diaries are compiled about the trip, in English as well as in French.

MUSIC

Choral music

Learners perform the gospel melody *Standing in the need of prayer* and add harmony parts that (a) move in parallel and (b) are modified to fit with conventional harmonies. They listen to gospel music from South Africa, London and the United States, focusing on ways in which changes of texture create variety and interest, and listen with a similar focus to traditional choral pieces from New Zealand, Bulgaria and Pakistan. Finally, they arrange a group performance of a gospel melody and compose their own a-cappella pieces incorporating idiomatic features of one of the styles which they have studied.

Muslim hip hop and points arising

Young people listen to various Muslim rappers and visit their websites, and look at some the debates that have taken place, and continue to take place within Muslim communities, about whether Islam and Hip Hop music are compatible with each other. If their judgement is there is no inherent incompatibility, they compose, perform and record their own work.

Reviewing

Learners listen to, for example, *London Undersound* by Nitin Sawhney (2008) and compare their own reactions with those of a BBC reviewer (Chris Jones): '...For younger Londoners one gets the feeling that this cultural smorgasbord may be a little too smooth ... You won't find grime creeping in here. Musically, Sawhney is a polymath, but his brew sometimes seems too safe Such a huge city contains far more than his blend of flamenco, beats and Asian signifiers ... bejewelled and intricate but one longs for some grit ... Too polite to convey the anger, tension, sense of betrayal and essentially contradictory nature of living in the nation's capital in 2008 ... an album with its heart firmly in the right place, but lacking in bite.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Wall of heroes

Learners prepare a wall of sporting heroes. A large wallspace is selected and covered with sugar paper and over the period of a sporting season learners build up a collage of pictures and words. They bring in photographs of their heroes, and paste them onto the 'wall'. They also paste up quotations, perhaps using the antiracist football websites to help them. Also they write their own words or poems to add to the wall. The display features both women and men; athletes who are disabled; athletes who are or are said to be gay; and athletes from a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Code of practice

Learners visit websites such as Kick It Out, Show Racism the Red Card, and Football Unites Racism Divides, run by Sheffield United. They make a list of issues relating to the eradication of racism on football terraces and in football management. They draw up a code of conduct for their own school, including in this the school playground as well as official games, and include in this issues of disability equality, homophobia and sexism

Kiddiesville

Learners visit the website of Kiddiesville Football Club, and note its themes relating to disability, ethnicity and gender. They write additional poems and songs, and press reports on matches against opponents.

Paralympics

In the run-up to 2012, learners take a special interest in the Paralympics, using a wide range of resources, research projects, websites and blogs.

Biographies

Learners research the lives and achievements of specific individuals, for example Amir Khan, using material on The Red Card website, also in Red Card's Islamophobia pack) or Ade Adepitan, using a film about him made by Teachers TV.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

What next?

Learners discuss real or imagined incidents where there is uncertainty about what should happen next. They write letters or messages to a helpline, blog or agony column, and discuss and draft possible answers. Also, they consider where they themselves would turn for advice, assistance and guidance on matters such those raised by the stories. They evaluate the real answers given on similar topics in magazines and on websites.

Living and learning

Learners are given about six short extracts from biographical writings, and draw up lists of questions they would like to ask if they had the opportunity to meet the people who are featured in the writings. They then convert these into real interview schedules and use the schedules to interview certain individuals. They may then write similar pieces themselves, or create video diaries, or create profiles of themselves on Facebook or Bebo.

Sibel's story

Learners use a Persona doll to construct and tell the story of Sibel, a five year old child from Iran whose family is seeking asylum in the UK. Information is provided by the teacher about reasons for leaving Iran and the dangerous journey to the UK. Imaginary family photographs are found on the internet and culturally relevant artefacts such as clothing are obtained from friends. Commonalities between Sibel and the learners are established, for example with regard to the likes, dislikes and worries of any five-year-old girl in the world. As the story progresses there is consideration of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. (For further information and ideas, visit the website of Portsmouth Ethnic Minority Support Service at www.blss.portsmouth.sch.uk/default.htm.)

Moral courage

Learners investigate the story of Rosa Parks and her role in the early days of the civil rights movement in the United States. (Useful books at key stages 1 and 2 include *The Bus Ride* by William Miller and *A Picture Book of Rosa Parks* by David Adler.) They discuss the concept of moral courage, using materials developed by the Anne Frank Trust UK and available at www.annefrank.org.uk, and make real or imagined entries for the Anne Frank Moral Courage Awards programme. They sign up to the Anne Frank Declaration and create posters about this for the classroom and school corridors.

Gender roles in childhood

Learners work with a selection of birthday cards addressed to family members – ‘To my daughter’, ‘To my dad’, and so forth, and some cards welcoming a new baby. What are the assumptions and expectations that are expressed about gender roles and qualities? They work also with advertisements for toys. Are certain toys clearly marketed for the one gender or the other? They construct and administer a questionnaire to investigate whether the assumptions in cards and advertisements are held by themselves and their peers. Finally, they write letters to card and toy manufacturers with their observations, and collate the replies they receive.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Reviewing a project

Learners visit the website of the Tanenbaum Center and make a note of projects that catch their interest. They then choose one of these to focus on, listing what they see as its strengths and advantages of the project, noting any reservations or criticisms they may have, and listing the questions they would like to ask if there were a chance of speaking and meeting with a representative of the project. They then interact with similar questions to projects in the school’s local neighbourhood.

To be a British Muslim

Learners attend to the testimony and experience of young British Muslims, as outlined and discussed on the websites of *Muslim News*, *Q News* and the Muslim Council of Britain, and in the 2004 report of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia. They identify commonalities, similarities and differences in the lives and identities of British Christians, British Jews and British Sikhs, and then also at dual identities such as Black British, Scottish British, Mancunian British.

Problem or solution?

Learners debate three ‘Big Myths’ set out in *Connect: different faiths, shared values*, published by the Inter Faith Network in association with TimeBank and the National Youth Agency in 2004. The myths are (1) ‘Well, they may say they’re religious but no-one believes any of that stuff’ (2) ‘Religious people are just a bunch of fanatics’ and (3) ‘Religion divides people – all the religions hate each other’. They then sort through some of the stories and case studies in the *Connect* booklet about practical inter-faith projects in various parts of Britain. For each project they ask and consider three questions: What do you see as the strengths of this project? What reservations or criticisms do you have? If you could meet someone from the project what would you ask?

Fool, trickster, rogue or sage?

Learners read or enact a number of Mullah Nasruddin stories, and re-tell some of them using modern contexts and references. Which stories show a foolish or ignorant person, which show a trickster, which a rogue, a wise person? Do some show all four? Can they summarise the teachings in the stories with pithy sayings of their own devising? Instead or as well, which pithy or proverbial sayings, in a collection provided for them, do they consider most relevant to summarise each story?

SCIENCE

Commonalities and differences

In a topic on *Ourselves*, learners make surveys of various physical characteristics, including skin colour, eye colour, gender and height, and of personal interests, for example favourite foods, celebrities, music and pets, and draw Venn diagrams to show commonalities and differences.

The spread of knowledge

Learners play a version of the game *Woolly Thinking* in order to study the spread of knowledge in the year 1000. The game vividly illustrates and dramatises interactions between China, India, the Middle East and Europe and portrays science as a universal human activity. Full details and instructions can be found on the website of the Muslim Home School Network, based in the United States, at <http://www.muslimhomeschool.com> – click on *Pride* and then on educational material.

Learners then explore the wealth of material about Muslim science at www.muslimheritage.com and the implications of such material for any British classroom in the 21st century at the website of the Islamic Society of Britain (www.isb.org.uk and follow the links to the Virtual Classroom.)

Women in science, engineering and technology

Learners familiarise themselves with facts and theory relating to the under-representation of women in science-based careers and make recommendations for action at their own school.

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Source: This paper is derived from material in *Holding Together: equalities, difference and cohesion, a resource for school improvement planning*, published for Derbyshire Education Authority by Trentham Books, summer 2009.