Creativity, Culture Awareness, Covid-19 and the Catch-up Curriculum

Enhancing Children’s Cultural Passport at Grange Park Beginning 2021
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All about Grange Park

It has been a difficult time for almost every school and every profession since the first lockdown of 2019. Since then, Grange Park has seen a curriculum overhaul of such magnitude, which has meant that the teaching and support staff have completely shifted the way they teach and plan in order to be child led and fully inclusive. In previous years, there was such a heavy focus on Maths and English orientated subjects, that often lessons such as Music, Art, Drama and Dance were seldom taught or offered as a curriculum experience and entitlement for children.

Grange Park is located in the City of Sunderland and has 220 children on roll from The Early Years through to Year 6. We are a one form entry school which is currently creating an outdoor classroom to enhance our lesson provisions. This curriculum overhaul has meant we can start with a blank canvas to design a purpose built curriculum for our children.

The Start of our Journey

Research shows that when children and families’ cultures are valued, both the child’s experience of learning and progress can benefit (Husain et al., 2018, p. 4 and Gazzard, E. 2018 in Chalmers, H. and Crisfield, E. 2019). Here at Grange Park, we are creating a curriculum which will equip children with the skills, knowledge and cultural capital they need to be active citizens in life during and after their
time in school. Grange Park believes Cultural Capital is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviours and skills that a child can draw upon which demonstrates their cultural awareness, knowledge and competencies. It is one of the key ingredients a pupil will draw upon to be successful in society, their career and their world of work. It allows children achieve goals, become successful, and rise up the social ladder without necessarily having wealth or financial capital. Cultural capital is having assets that give children the desire to aspire and achieve social mobility whatever their starting point. This year, Grange Park has endeavoured to completely overhaul the curriculum, looking at planning maps and lesson design to ensure we offer children the education and experiences they are entitled to.

What are we doing for the children? Our cultural development curriculum:

- Grange Park Primary School is embarking on the Artsmark journey. We value the arts curriculum and enhancing the cultural opportunities for our children, regardless of their starting points or any time they may have missed during lockdown. To begin this journey, I audited our staff, as well as looking into our curriculum offer which has allowed us the opportunity to create a bespoke curriculum. Bubble closures have not stopped our commitment to including parents and families in the Artsmark journey so far and we have held a virtual National Poetry Day, as well as extending curriculum takeover days virtually, to ensure every child is included. The purpose of this journey is to enhance the cultural experiences for the children at Grange Park and to allow them the opportunity to develop essential skills and knowledge which will help the children succeed during their time at school and beyond.

- As the easing of lockdown is now beginning, we have welcomed after school provisions. This will allow for additional opportunities to nurture children’s cultural understanding through extra-curricular opportunities including a film and dance club. We recognise that children are unique and original individuals and should play an active part in the arts to help develop their own sense of cultural capital during their time at Grange Park.

- For the first time in Grange Park’s history, I am in the process of creating a School Parliament. Voting for the different ministers took place on the 9th June 2021, where children from Year 1 to Year 6 were voted in, by their students, to be members of the Grange Park Parliament. In Year 4, a child was voted as The Arts Minister, who will be working to gather student voice and liaising with subject leads to build a curriculum which is child led.
Starting this academic year, I have helped to design and implement Curriculum Takeover Days which have enabled whole school projects such as:

- WW1 and Sunderland’s local history through the film Asunder. Here we led creative writing workshops, art, music as well as history.
- The Sunderland Home Design Challenge which allowed the children to continue to look at site history in Sunderland and design a home of the future, linking to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths).
- Sir Captain Tom Day. Here the whole school looked at the history of Captain Tom, we looked at his song, as well as creating art inspired by the legend of lockdown.
- We celebrated the 100th birthday of a lady who came to Grange Park as a student when it first opened. Here we created art and sang a song for her in the school garden, which was recorded and sent to her home.
- Linking to Mental Health week we had a bee inspired day, linking to aspirations. Here the children studied bees, created their own creative writing and poems, created art work as well as participated in a live audience production.
- We have had a curriculum takeover day linked to The Stations of the Cross. Here we had a whole school art project where each class was designated different stages. We all came together throughout the day to make our own station journey, using eggs to represent significant characters and events.

This academic year, I have supported staff in implementing a whole school music curriculum which is Charanga. In previous years, a whole school Music curriculum was not implemented, so this year some year groups have participated in learning to play the glockenspiel and other instruments, as well as learning to sing and vital warming up exercises.

To support Music progression in school, I have created and disseminated Music word of the week resources for class teachers to support the development of musical vocabulary. In addition to this, each class has been given a Music mantra for their displays to support children’s confidence and understanding regarding the importance of Music, and how it links to the wider curriculum.
To ensure a cohesive and structured Art plan, which takes into account progression of skills and coverage, I have also created a whole school revised Art plan to support the teaching and learning of Art, to ensure every key stage is exposed to the fundamental skills of art.
The Impact:

I really like all the different activities we can do. I enjoyed the bee day and joining in with the theatre performance ‘Uncle Beard’s Garden’.

~ Emilee ~

I enjoyed when we made cards for Lydia who turned 100. We sang in the garden and it was lovely to have everyone together.

~ Olivia ~

I really like how we can learn about Music and Art this year but that this is fun learning. We learned all about bees through a play which I didn’t think would happen. I love being creative.

~ Caiden ~

I love the Music lessons every week because we get to learn about different artists, such as ABBA and The Beatles, and we can also learn at home too.

~ Sam ~

I really like the Music lessons because it’s calming. I don’t feel like I am a good musician but when I sing along and watch how to play the instruments it helps me feel like I can do it.

~ Kaylum ~

This year has been really fun because I have been learning new things, such as Guadi in Art and how he used to be a lamppost designer to The Beatles in Music.

~ Poppy ~

I love learning all of the different songs and dances. In Art, I love exploring colour and seeing how different artists create their work. I love it when we can take our lessons outdoors.

~ Rachael ~

I love how the creative lessons aren’t always focused on writing. I love being able to explore others ways of expressing my ideas.

~ Jamie ~