

The Newsletter of The Park Academies Trust - Issue 2: Transition

Subject specific improvements

Each cross-phase team has mapped the curriculum through from Year 5 to Year 8. This has identified duplication that is now being removed and points where the sequencing of concepts/topics can be improved. In addition:

English



Reading texts first used in Year 6 were being repeated in Year 7. Not any more! Analysis techniques taught in Year 6 will now be incorporated and built on in KS3. Shared resources are being developed and common terminology agreed between primary and secondary teachers.

Science



Subject specialist teaching has been provided for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, utilising the science labs at Abbey Park. Key vocabulary to be emphasised at KS2 has been highlighted. Primary staff are advising on how to improve inclusion and accessibility in KS3 science.

Mathematics



A Year 9 to Year 6 mentoring scheme is being devised. Work undertaken at Red Oaks to develop fluency, reasoning and problem solving has helped shape the decision to adopt the ARK Maths Mastery scheme at KS3 in both Trust secondary schools.

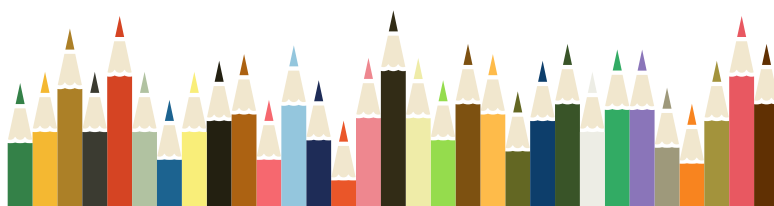


Year 6 pupils investigate the effect of acid rain on rocks in a science lesson at Abbey Park

Off to a flyer!

It's now a year since Red Oaks Primary School and Abbey Park School embarked on an innovative transition project that will shape education in all TPAT schools. A lot has happened already and here we explain our rationale and progress to date.

It's an established fact that most secondary schools need to do much better when it comes to successfully building on the progress that pupils make at Key Stage 2. Whilst there are good reasons (not least the wholesale reforms of GCSEs and 'A' levels) that have meant time and energy has been focussed away from Years 7 to 9, the implementation of these reforms in itself leads back to Key Stage 3, as it has become abundantly clear that early secondary years must be used better for pupils to meet the demands of tougher examination courses.





Year 6 pupils investigate the circulatory system in a specialist-taught science lesson at Abbey Park

Humanities



Work in both schools on the topic of WW2 will be sequenced better. The Year 7 topic on 'Life After Death' will be reviewed to flow better from the equivalent Year 6 topic. New geography topics will be developed together, including atlas work and map skills.

Computing and Business



Key terminology will be agreed and sequenced to sit alongside a structured approach to developing key skills. Internet use and E-Safety will form the basis of a cross-curricular project.

Modern Foreign Languages



Subject specialist teaching has been provided for Year 5 pupils. This will allow pupils to gain a secure knowledge of a target language by the start of Year 7.

SEND/Intervention



We have taken the opportunity to share best practice across the Trust, implemented a cross-phase morphology literacy programme, standardised the format of our annual SEND reports to parents, and increased collaboration between phases.

Forward thinking schools working together

In Spring 2018, Red Oaks Primary School decided to join The Park Academies Trust. This created the perfect test-bed for something new. As only a simple gate separates Abbey Park School playground from Red Oaks, the potential for sharing expertise, resources and facilities was instantly created.

Two initial joint staff meetings created the ground rules for the project:

1. Both schools are equal partners in terms of how much they stand to gain from the project, and also the importance of the expertise they bring to the table
2. Cross-phase teams of teachers would drive each part of the project and decide where the best opportunities lay for their subject/area of responsibility
3. Senior leaders would facilitate by identifying meeting times and resources, and would also spot emerging themes that needed to be escalated to whole school interventions.



Year 5 pupils learn dodgeball at Abbey Park School

We're now looking forward to reviewing the first year's work at an end of year joint staff meeting and planning for the next steps in 2019/2020.



Each subject has now developed its own cross-phase approach, examples of which you can read here (alongside). There are also whole school interventions emerging which will shape all Trust schools moving forwards.....

Teaching writing - Red Oaks leaders led an excellent session with subject leaders from both Abbey Park School and Lydiard Park Academy, which made it abundantly clear how KS2 standards have risen. As a result, all Trust secondary staff will be schooled in the 'Talk for Writing' approach that is widely used in primary schools, and will then be able to build on this in their own teaching



Well being - Exciting work has been taking place around mental health and well-being with the Trust successfully winning a bid to train and utilise four of the eleven new Swindon mental health trailblazers. These will be working with students and parents across both primary and secondary phases of the Trust. We have also implemented a cogent self-evaluation tool through which students are reporting perspectives on their own well-being in order to identify barriers to learning and thereby we have been able to develop and introduce new interventions where necessary.



Design & Technology



A focus on the sequencing of teaching basic skills has allowed Abbey Park teachers to avoid unnecessary repetition and see where to extend pupils sooner. Year 5 pupils have been able to use the specialist Food Technology areas at Abbey Park.

Music and Drama



Duplication in Drama topics has been highlighted and addressed. Music at Red Oaks clearly meets the pre-entry skills needed at Abbey Park, giving secondary staff the confidence to move smoothly into Key Stage 3 without repetition.



Physical Education

Red Oaks pupils now enjoy access to the sports facilities next door at Abbey Park. Key skills and routines to be built up during KS2 have been highlighted, along with a common basic structure for all lessons (warm up - skills/drill - game). Teachers are developing an all-through approach to teaching analytical thinking and effective feedback.

Art



Abbey Park pupils will be helping with specialist master classes for Red Oaks pupils. Year 6 pupils will complete a 'best piece' as a transition project.



More Trust News.....

Orchid Vale decision approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner

Orchid Vale Primary School has now completed a period of staff, parent and community consultation regarding its intention to join The Park Academies Trust. We are delighted to report that the consultation supported the decision taken by the Governing Body, and that the Department of Education (working through the South West Regional Schools Commissioner) has also now given its agreement. We anticipate the legalities will be completed in the early autumn and very much look forward to growing our professional community.

Nice to be popular!

All Trust schools continue to be firmly in parents' thoughts when choosing schools for their children.

We anticipate that Reception places at Red Oaks Primary School will, once again, be full next September, and applications for Nursery places are also close to capacity.

For pupils starting secondary education, Lydiard Park Academy continues to be oversubscribed for Year 7 entries for September 2019. In testimony to how far the school has improved since being taken into the Trust two and a half years ago, Abbey Park School is also full for Year 7 entries next September, something which hasn't happened since the site was first opened ten years ago.

Applications for places in the Trust's Sixth Form in West Swindon are also up by around 20% - a clear response to becoming Swindon's highest performing sixth form in last summer.



Train to teach with us!

Throughout the year we have been recruiting trainees for a new School Direct training hub, which we set up in conjunction with three other Swindon schools - St. Joseph's Catholic College, Highworth Warneford School and The Commonweal School. We now have our first cohort of trainee secondary school teachers ready to start training with us from September, and The Swindon Teacher Training Partnership has quickly become established as a popular choice in the South West area. We would still be interested in receiving applications from candidates interested in training to teach maths, computing, or design and technology, so, if you're thinking about training, do get in touch! (www.sttp.org.uk)

The Park Academies Trust is a charitable trust working to improve educational standards and social mobility in Swindon.

Including schools that are currently academising to join the Trust, we are:

