

THE RECOVERY CURRICULUM



The need for recovery

Recently, a think piece entitled [A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and Life for our children and schools post pandemic](#) was published. In it, mental health expert, Professor Barry Carpenter recommends five sensible 'levers' that can help your school recover following a 'systematic, relationships-based approach to reigniting the flame of learning in each child.'

There are five main factors that will help the academy to achieve them.

- Staff expertise
- Support from local community
- The right curriculum, tools and resources
- National provision
- Time

Lever 1: rebuild relationships

Positive relationships are vital for child development. Children may have experienced loss during the pandemic, including the loss of relationships with their peers. They will need help to re-establish friendships, reconnect with staff and work with others.

Implement a clear curriculum pedagogy. It transforms a child's experience at school, provides structure and ensures we are delivering content in the most effective way. But it can also help rebuild relationships by fostering collaboration, empathy, confidence and self-expression.

Teach projects that explore relationship themes. Sequence curriculum content so that children meaningfully revisit and build upon their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Offer regular opportunities for children to work together on purposeful, absorbing and rewarding tasks. Provide challenge and allow them to innovate and find solutions.

Identify overarching human concepts and themes that can run throughout our curriculum and deepen children's understanding.

Lever 2: understand the individual child and their community

Our curriculum principles are already informed by our Academy's values, aims and the needs of the community. Children from different communities may have experienced the lockdown in different ways. The curriculum can help children tell their stories, strengthen their sense of self, family, community, and place in the wider world.

Allow time for individual children and families to tell their lockdown stories. Adapt curriculum content to reflect this or be flexible with delivery.

Model good speaking and listening skills and empower children with the emotional vocabulary they need to express their thoughts and feelings.

Teach projects and regular PSHE sessions that cover themes such as identity, personal feelings, similarities and differences and community belonging.

Engage children with high quality resources, such as stories, games, songs, discussion prompts and videos. They should reflect cultures within and beyond your community.

Interesting, relevant themes will also engage parents – something many schools teaching the Cornerstones projects often attest to.

Recommended texts:

- ▶ *Halibut Jackson*'s protagonist is an introverted costume designer who creates outfits to help him blend in. Upon receiving an invitation to a royal event, he could have never predicted that the suit he creates wouldn't help him disappear at a garden party! David Lucas helps children to deal with themes of independence, resilience and isolation through his illustrations and words. This book is great to support children to return to society after an extended period on their own and a personal favourite of ours to use in EYFS.
- ▶ *The Bear Under the Stairs* and *Black Dog* are both wonderful texts that deal with the anxiety caused by an unknown, looming threat and how, as humans, worry and stress can build up and overflow into something unwanted and unpleasant; how they can grow and morph into something different. The former is a shadowy threat that hides under the stairs and literally needs 'feeding', the latter is a menace that forces a family inside their home until someone small and brave overcomes it. Both these books will be great for children experiencing the anxiety of an intangible enemy.
- ▶ *The Heart and the Bottle* deals more directly with the themes of loss and grief as the central character places her heart in a 'safe place' to stop it ever being broken again. The metaphor here is the act of bottling up feelings, so even if children aren't experiencing grief directly, it's a great place to spark conversations about emotions and the need to express them. *If All the World Were* is another favourite for dealing with the loss of a loved one.

- ▶ *The Selfish Giant* explores a character who is isolated and alone and how friendship and play can help him 'blossom' and both literally and figuratively break down walls. This is ideal in a situation where children are moving out of a period of isolation back into society and helps address this transition and that it is not always an easy shift.
- ▶ *The Lost Thing*, *Lost and Found* and *Tadpole's Promise* all deal with unusual relationships and the long-lasting bonds we form throughout our lives. Children will have potentially had to form relationships or adapt existing relationships during this period and will have to actively work at restoring them, or creating new ones when they return to school, so literature of this sort is a great way to explore such issues. The latter, *Tadpole's Promise*, also deals with the theme of change (the tadpole and its beau, the caterpillar, both inevitably change and adapt and this will help open up conversations about how we may not be the same people we were before lockdown).
- ▶ *The Legend of Sally Jones*, the incredible story of an ape from birth to adulthood and the many adventures, experiences and relationships she forms along the way is perfect for exploring the concept of trust as the protagonist is so often let down through her relationships with humans, but doesn't ever lose hope or the ability to trust. This book is perfect for opening up dialogue about trust as we return to pre-existing relationships in school or, potentially, have to adapt to new teachers in our lives.
- ▶ *The Arrival* deals with themes of isolation (from family) and isolation within a community, as many of Shaun Tan's stories do, reflecting his own feelings of personal isolation growing up in Perth, Australia. The central protagonist's struggles to adapt to a new way of living and separation from loved ones provides an opportunity to open up dialogue about our own feelings of loneliness and the peculiarities of adapting to a new normal.

Text	Author	Themes to explore
<i>How to Live Forever</i>	Colin Thompson	Trust, hope, loss
<i>Journey</i>	Aaron Becker	Isolation, escapism
<i>Quest</i>	Aaron Becker	Friendship, independence
<i>Return</i>	Aaron Becker	Loneliness
<i>Flotsam</i>	David Wiesner	Trust
<i>Free Fall</i>	David Wiesner	Dreams, escapism
<i>Fossil</i>	Bill Thomson	Normality, change
<i>Window</i>	Jeannie Baker	Hope, change, conservation
<i>Mirror</i>	Jeannie Baker	Hope, change, conservation
<i>The Lost Thing</i>	Shaun Tan	Relationships, trust
<i>Leon and the Place Between</i>	Angela McAllister & Grahame Baker-Smith	Belief, trust, relationships
<i>The Winter's Child</i>	Angela McAllister & Grahame Baker-Smith	Hope
<i>The Polar Express</i>	Chris van Allsburg	Trust
<i>The Flower</i>	John Light	Trust, hope
<i>FaRther</i>	Grahame Baker-Smith	Loss, hope, ambition, dreams
<i>The Heart and the Bottle (Y2+)</i>	Oliver Jeffers	Grief, loss
<i>Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth</i>	Oliver Jeffers	Self-discovery
<i>Varmints</i>	Helen Ward	Conservation, hope
<i>The Tin Forest</i>	Helen Ward	Conservation, hope
<i>Weslandia</i>	Paul Fleischman	Social isolation, independence
<i>Black Dog</i>	Levi Pinfold	Anxiety, hope
<i>The Fox and the Star</i>	Coralie Bickford-Smith	Change, hope

Lever 3: know, acknowledge and address the gaps in learning through a transparent curriculum

Missed learning is a complex issue. Children's needs will vary and not all gaps can – or should – be addressed immediately. Our curriculum has sequenced knowledge and skills, enabling a flexible route to recovery.

Identify significant curriculum coverage that children have missed during the spring and summer terms. These include subject aspects and concepts that need embedding before children can move on, or that they are not likely to revisit in future projects.

Use of Target Tracker to identify and reassign gaps.

Consider less content in the short and medium term, but in more depth. This will help children become more secure in their knowledge and skills.

Lever 4: metacognition – ensure the children continue to develop the skills for learning

Professor Carpenter states that ‘it is vital that we make the skills for learning in a school environment explicit’. If children are to get back on track and have self-efficacy, they will need to be aware of the skills they need to learn.

Offer a curriculum pedagogy that teaches and provides ample practice for metacognition strategies. These include planning, identifying how to solve problems, organisation, self-evaluation, analysis, adjusting and more.

Teach projects that explore positive models of human personal development; resilience, character, adapting to challenges and achievement.

Share the bigger picture. Let children know about and have a say in the route their learning is taking them on. This will help to keep them motivated, give them hope, and provide a sense of purpose.

Empower children with subject knowledge and highlight the learning approaches that are useful for specific subjects. For example, with older children, explain how geographical enquiry might look different from historical enquiry.

Lever 5: a curriculum that engages and inspires, gives children the space to adjust and minimises any disadvantages

This is a crucial lever. Children deserve to experience joy and to be engaged if they are to feel secure and positive about being in school again. Lockdown may have been a narrow experience for them, but school can lift children's spirits and provide welcome relief.

Again, set a clear pedagogy that values and promotes curiosity, deep focus, innovation and self-expression. These are not just valuable for academic development – they are important for personal growth and fulfilment.

Prioritise a love of, and the skills involved in, reading – it's the essential tool for accessing a wide curriculum.

Plan a rich curriculum that broadens children's horizons and covers a wealth of topics and themes. Exciting subjects to spark the imagination; choose projects that children will enjoy and that build on their interests.

Deliver shorter projects that cover the essential skills and knowledge needed for key topics and that are already fully resourced.

Provide resources that are high quality, pitched right, and enjoyable to use. Videos, stories, texts, physical resources and visitors – virtual or otherwise – will bring the curriculum to life for your children.

Rekindle the joy in your teachers. Provide workload-saving curriculum tools, plans and resources that are flexible and need only minimal adaptation. Consider changes to Marking Policy, focus more on distance marking sheets as opposed to in book comments.

	Year 1	Year2	Year 3
Arrive	8.30	8.45	9.00
Morning Break	10.00 – 10.20	10.25 – 10.45	10.50 – 11.10
Lunch	11.45 – 12.45	11.50 -12.50	12.25 – 13.25
Depart	3.00	3.15	3.30

	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Arrive	8.45	9.00	8.30
Morning Break	10.25 – 10.45	10.50 – 11.10	10.00 – 10.20
Lunch	11.50 – 12.50	12.25 – 13.25	11.45 – 12.45
Depart	3.15	3.30	3.00