



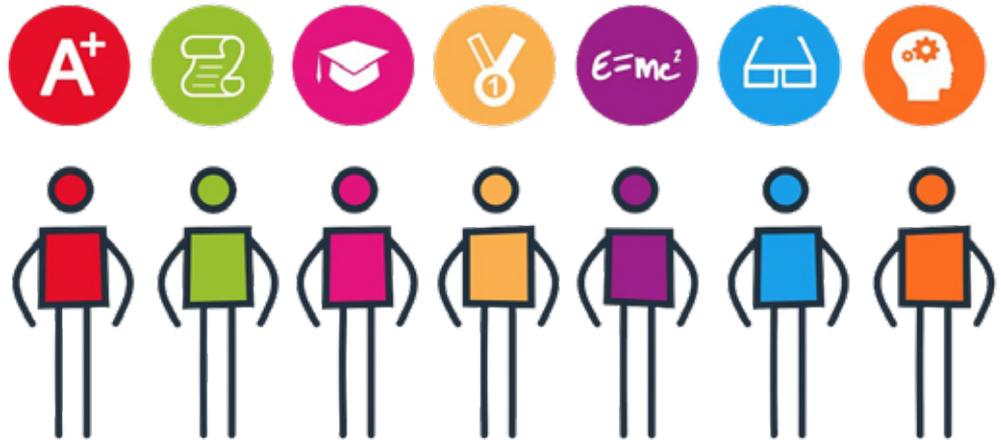
Thematic Approach, Curriculum Changes

In September 2019, we introduced a bespoke programme of study for pupils in **Years 7 and 8** focused on a thematic approach to learning.

The Common Entrance humanities syllabuses do not adequately equip pupils with the skills they need for the future, with too much emphasis placed on testing and examinations. As part of a rigorous academic curriculum that we hope will give pupils a more relevant and more stimulating learning experience, our focus will be on ensuring that pupils have the skills and dispositions that will mean they leave Vinehall as independent, engaged learners.

The themes will broadly fall into two categories, social history and natural history, with an emphasis on providing pupils with a sense of place and a sense of purpose. We want pupils' understanding of contemporary issues to be informed by a coherent chronological narrative that will enable them to appreciate both their place in an ongoing story and the responsibilities they have when it comes to writing the next chapters.

The themes for Year 7 are: Conflict, Planet Earth and Equality and rights. Alongside the core content, each



department will explore cross-curricular links to the theme. For example, for the theme of Conflict, pupils will read Thomas Hardy's *Drummer Hodge* and *The Man He Killed* in English lessons. In maths, they will study Florence Nightingale's Rose Diagram and examine statistics that reveal that modern states are more peaceful than tribal societies. Pupils will learn about Napoleon by listening to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in music and about Britain's failed attempt to fight a war in Afghanistan nearly two centuries ago by studying Elizabeth Butler's *Remnants of an Army* in art lessons.

The culmination of Years 7 and 8 will be an independent research

project, providing each pupil with the opportunity to study a topic in greater depth.

The pupils will present their findings at the end of Year 8 to an audience of their peers, their parents and teachers, as well as teachers from their future schools.

Paul Borrows,
Assistant Head, Academic



pborrows@vinehallschool.com

"We are delighted that you are considering introducing a curriculum which is wholly relevant in preparing students for their move to secondary school, and we fully support this initiative."

Arabella Stuart, Registrar – Sevenoaks

'Thank you so much for your very welcome and interesting reforms to the curriculum at the top of the school. King's loves creativity and inter-connectivity between subjects and disciplines, so please do know we are hugely supportive.'

Peter Roberts, Headmaster – King's Canterbury



THEMATIC CURRICULUM – CONFLICT

To begin the theme of Conflict we are returning to 1066 and the Norman Conquest. We will then continue to examine the impact that conflict has on society by learning about the Crusades, Elizabeth I's wars and The Seven Years War, before reaching the nineteenth century and the Napoleonic Wars, the Great Game and Crimean War and the Boer Wars.

Throughout the term, links will be made with other curriculum subjects. The children will be learning about

the impact that the Roman conquest of Britain and the Norman Conquest had on the language we speak in their Latin and French lessons. In Maths, the children have been looking at graphs that illustrate how much more likely you would be to die in an untimely and unpleasant way if you lived in a tribal society.

In History and Art the children have been looking at the Bayeux Tapestry, analysing its reliability as a historical source as well as using it as a source of inspiration for developing and creating their own artwork. In Life Skills, the children will learn about pilgrimages and the importance of Jerusalem and the Holy Land to the Abrahamic.

In Music lessons meanwhile, the children have begun a topic focusing on Beethoven and looking at how conflict shaped his compositions. In English, the class novella is *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, through which the children will be learning about internal and societal conflict.

We hope that by introducing a thematic curriculum, the children will better appreciate that the world does not comprise of the discrete subjects they encounter at school; that instead all disciplines overlap and interweave, bringing greater richness and depth of interest and enjoyment.

Paul Borrows, Assistant Head Academic

GEOGRAPHY – ALIVE AND WELL!



Geography exists! It is robust and well-defined in its own right and is the middle overlap in the Venn diagram of environment, people and places. It is about the world we live in and it makes sense of our varied and wonderful planet which, as far as we know, is the only planet with cake!

Geography is not just there for random quiz questions, it opens the eyes of our pupils to the processes at work in the environment and makes sense of what is happening. There is a balance between the physical and the human elements of this discipline and both are of equal importance.

Our pupils study diverse topics, from city planning to plate tectonics, from denudation to ecotourism and many more. When possible we get out of the classroom to see the reality of the subject and this may range from trips to see rivers, coastlines, local settlements, farms, factories, our school grounds and many more. It is not all about the data, and enjoying a refreshing ice lolly sitting on a rock groyne made from Norwegian granite is just as important in the appreciation of our environment.

As a department we enjoy a bit of friendly banter from other staff, as they say all we do is 'colour things in'! The correct application of differential pigment is certainly a good skill but the core geography skills are embedded into the subject material; by the end of Year 8 the pupils will have been exposed to skills that will help them have a better understanding of what geography is all about.

Nick Butcher,
Head of Geography



nickbutcher@vinehallschool.com

HEADS UP



"Where do you stand on competition in your school? Do you believe it is better kept to a minimum, or could encouraging a competitive spirit unlock even more of a child's potential?"

If we were to dampen the competitive spirits within our children, we would not be best preparing them for their futures. Fundamental to the personal development of a child's character and self-confidence is a carefully managed balance between seeking success and building resilience. At Vinehall we believe it is our responsibility to encourage an ethos of positive, cooperative and modest competition. We have high expectations for every child in all that they do, but we ensure that a healthy scaffolding has been built around them to enable each child to experience success.

As a school 'full of opportunities', we are conscious that our children will reach their potential only if they experience challenge and healthy competition along the way. Moulding confident but humble and compassionate children is our purpose, who will leave us with the broadest possible range of skills and passions.

Joff Powis
Headmaster Vinehall School

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