

A journey into Inquiry

INTENT

Inquiry is the process by which we ask questions and discover new things. In education terms it is a shift away from the traditional model of teachers sharing knowledge, towards a model where students ask their own questions to discover their own knowledge

When you teach a child something you take away forever his chance of discovering it for himself.

Jean Piaget 1972

The inquiry process follows a **constructivist** approach to learning, in that students construct knowledge based on their experiences and ideas.

The process of inquiry has often been described as a cycle, but in practice it is much more complex and organic. There are clear stages in the inquiry process but they may be revisited more than once throughout the learning journey.



Student Agency is having the opportunity to choose what, where, how, when, and with who you learn. The global workplace is changing rapidly. Our six year old students may be working in jobs that haven't yet been invented, with technology that is yet to be developed. We have a duty to prepare our learners with the skills needed to thrive in such an environment. We need students to develop skills of creativity, communication, collaboration and critical thinking. We want them to be literate in technology, information and media. We want them to have the chance to practice being flexible, try out leadership, take initiative, play with productivity, and develop their social skills.

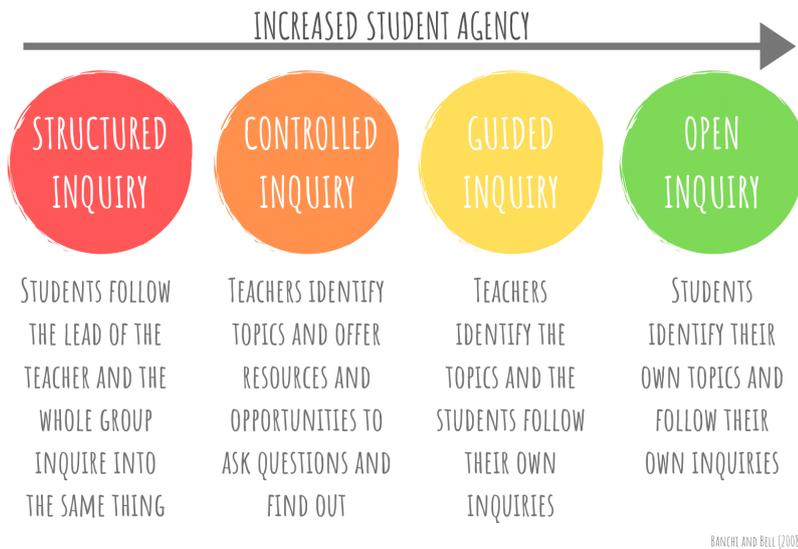
Learning sticks when it is **authentic**, and when students have a real-world need to learn. When students need to know something that is important to them, it is difficult to stop them. We want to harness this natural curiosity and desire to learn through inquiries that allow for student agency. In order to do this, inquiries are **concept driven** which allows children the opportunity to follow their own pathways. For example, an inquiry into systems for survival may spark an interest in dinosaurs and volcanos, map reading and outdoor survival skills, or how to navigate friendships groups on social media. It all stems from the children and their experiences and ideas.

We want students to leave primary school as confident inquirers, who ask thoughtful questions and have the skills to go about finding out the answers for themselves. We want students to be divergent thinkers, researchers, analysts, reflective citizens. We want students to know how to learn.

IMPLEMENTATION

We offer three **transdisciplinary** inquiries per year, each lasting for a term. Each inquiry is driven by a pair of concepts that allow for the students to develop an understanding of a Big Idea as well as gaining subject specific knowledge.

Teachers meet to unpack the concepts at the beginning of each term. They project the types of learning experiences that they children might be interested in. They also link the appropriate learning objectives from the National Curriculum to the inquiry.



There are different levels of inquiry depending on the skills, ages and experience of the students. Teachers choose an appropriate inquiry process for their group of learners. As students have increased agency over their learning, the role of the teacher starts to change. Teachers take on the role of facilitator, observing closely the child's learning journey, and offering nudges and next steps to take them further.

Teachers set the environment and offer provocations at the beginning of each inquiry as part of the tuning-in stage. They document the children's questions, understandings and misconceptions. Teachers collaborate to discuss what they are noticing and wondering, in order to plan for next steps.

Documentation plays a vital role in the inquiry process. Teachers and students document their thinking and experiences, in order to reflect on them. Documentation may take the form of photos, videos, writing, drawings, models, or art work.

Teachers collaborate throughout an inquiry at weekly meetings and by sharing documentation on the shared google drive. Teachers take an inquiry stance in their work, attending workshops, reading articles and trying out new ideas.

Cultural Capital is...

'...the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.'

Ofsted School Inspection Handbook 2019

Transdisciplinary inquiries give students the opportunity for authentic, real-world experiences, where they start to take control of their own learning. Inquiries are non-linear and need to be

navigated. Students will experience failure it allows students to develop cultural capital in the form of self-confidence, tolerance, grit, perseverance, objectivity, growth mindset, creativity, innovation, and flexibility.

Fairness | Approaches to Learning | Making Healthy Choices | International Citizenship
Living and Learning Safely | Yearning for Success

Our **Family Values** are explored and practiced throughout all inquiries.

IMPACT

The success of student conceptual understanding is measured against criteria set at the beginning of the inquiry. Documentation is collected that evidences the learning and tells the story of the journey. Learning is made visible to peers and the wider community of parents through exhibitions, performances and displays. Students are self-reflective, identifying what they have learned, what they found tricky and what they would do differently next time.

Teachers are reflective throughout the inquiry, taking note of what works well and what is challenging. These reflections are shared with the collaborative team in order to inform the next planning process.

Parents are invited to join the learning journey through their engagement with Tapestry (an online sharing platform). Parents are encouraged to read their child's updates with the child, sparking conversations and possible next steps. This takes inquiry learning outside the classroom and involves an authentic audience.

How are you showing children have met their objectives?

Teachers collaborate to identify National Curriculum objectives from multiple subjects in the Medium Term Plan. These objectives guide teacher's choice of provocations and invitations, which are documented in the shared Google Drive. Teachers meet at the end of the inquiry to share the stories of learning and

The National Curriculum objectives are evidenced and fed back to subject leaders.

What the students have to say...

What are your thoughts on inquiry learning?

- I like learning history
- Fun - because instead of being about one thing you can choose
- I like it

What do you like best?

- Presenting what I've learnt and making it
- Group work
- You get to choose what to do rather than being told to do a certain thing

What do you find tricky?

- Deciding how to present
- Choosing what to do and how to present
- Researching

Progression of skills

Inquiry skills begin to develop from birth. Babies and young children explore the world around them through their senses, exploration, and repetition. As children gain language one of the most common phrases we hear is 'why?'. Although we understand that the skills of inquiry are naturally present in young children, we know that we need to offer explicit teaching of these skills in order for them to flourish. The progression of development for these skills is linked to the amount of support and guidance the child needs. There needs to be a gradual release responsibility from the teacher to the student. At The Federation of Boskenwyn and Germoe Schools we offer inquiry-based learning in every year group, enabling children to develop and practice these skills with appropriate adult support.

Inquiry Skills

- exploring, wondering and questioning
- experimenting and playing with possibilities
- making connections between previous learning and current learning
- making predictions and acting purposefully to see what happens
- collecting data and reporting findings
- clarifying existing ideas and reappraising perceptions of events
- applying concepts to deepen conceptual understandings
- researching and seeking information
- establishing and testing theories
- solving problems in a variety of ways
- taking and defending a position

Inquiry skills are documented through Tapestry, self-reflection and Documentation Panels.

This is what inquiry looks like at Boskenwyn and Germoe...

