

What makes classroom practice effective?

By Claire Stoneman

Hi everyone, and welcome to the module which really is about the nuts and bolts of planning what we do in our classrooms, day-in day-out. As Mark Enser says, 'teaching is, at its heart, simple'.

There are many things that may on the surface seem simple and straightforward and that you need to know and practice as a novice teacher. We'll take you through them in this module. These elements of lessons may seem simple but doing these seemingly simple, straightforward things well is complex. But that's part of the intellectual joy and challenge of being a teacher.

Teaching has explored in the module how do pupils learn is joyful in its complexity and challenge. Our profession is one of intellectual intricacy underpinned by what can look stunningly simple, but to master these elements of teaching takes practice, questioning and dollops more practice. As novice teachers, and indeed as any teacher, we can't think of the nuts and bolts of lessons as separates of the curriculum. It's impossible. They're inextricably linked and the subject that we teach has to be prioritised. We need to continually read around the subject. We shouldn't get hung up on divvying up our lessons into specific little chunks of time because, as Stewart Locke says, 'it's not really possible to talk about how to teach something independently of what it is you are teaching'. When you're planning a lesson, start with what do you want the children to learn, know, understand. What's the best way of them learning that? Even if I talked about English lessons, that's quite generic. Do I mean English language or literature or linguistics? There are so many variables and complexities.

When I'm planning lessons on Macbeth, for example, I'm probably going to teach those lessons differently to how I teach first world war poetry. So when planning lessons, think of it as holding hands with the curriculum and then guiding that curriculum by the hand into your classroom. One simply cannot exist without the other.

Whilst we'll take you through different composite elements of lessons this isn't to suggest that these different elements should be present every lesson. You, with guidance from your mentor, will decide how long it will take for your pupils to meet an objective or less than question. In doing so you will have all these ingredients present, but they might not fit neatly into one lesson but rather over a series of lessons. You may well knit between each of them they don't have to necessarily follow a linear path. Questioning and checking for understanding for example is likely to be present frequently at different points throughout lessons. And again, thinking this through with the subject you're teaching in mind, is all part of what makes our profession a jubilant intellectual challenge in its oxymoronic simplicity and complexity.