

Sequencing a scheme of work - Primary and Secondary

By Emily Maule

When planning a scheme of work, once you have decided on the foundational concepts, knowledge and skills, you then have to decide how to order them.

There is real skill to doing this as the sequencing can make or break a pupil's overall engagement and understanding. A poorly sequenced scheme is like a tv series that is jumping around, that you can't follow, where you are expected to already know things about the characters or plot that you haven't yet been told. This is very frustrating for viewers and is similarly frustrating for pupils.

When thinking about sequencing, I have found it helpful to think about building from the ground up and never assuming any knowledge. If the knowledge is key, then it needs to be explicitly taught, or we run the risk of widening the educational gap. This means when I think I have my starting point, I carefully check that I am not relying on pupils' knowing or understanding a concept that I haven't explicitly taught, or a skill I am assuming they have that I have not explicitly practised with them.

For example, the lesson on how earthquakes take place requires a solid grounding on the structure of the earth and how tectonic plates behave, so it has to come after the lessons that teach those elements. But, it has to come before the lesson on the effects of earthquakes because pupils have to be able to understand the mechanics of earthquakes to understand why the effects can be so severe.

Finally, I think it is better to cover less material but in a more thorough way, rather than doing a cursory glance over a very broad array of things, which pupils won't be able to remember or engage with sufficiently. Allowing breathing time in case something needs to be revisited is an important element of this. So, I think one of the most important skills in designing a curriculum is discerning what to exclude as much as what to include. There is never enough time to do *everything!*