

Michael Palin – ‘Geography is a living, breathing subject, constantly adapting itself to change’

At Beckfoot Oakbank we aim to make our students successful geographers through creating lessons that encourage students to think and speak like geographer and give them a local, national and international perspective of places and spaces around them, as well as globally and how all the human, physical and environmental process around us interact and change over time. We are passionate about our subject and have different expertise across the broad curricular and share their specialisms to ensure we all develop subject knowledge. We give the students the confidence to articulate their opinions on world issues such as climate change. Our curriculum links to our whole school motto of enjoy, learn and succeed, we aim to stimulate enthusiasm for current issues encouraging the students to think hard, learn and remember more. We want all students to succeed at every level whether it be through contributions in class, extended writing or home learning quizzes.

Using the National Curriculum to give sufficient breadth while ensuring students are learning in sufficient depth, the curriculum is designed to be built upon year on year. Substantiated knowledge is linked to disciplinary knowledge which can be built on to ensure students can draw on this in the future. The substantiated knowledge of how countries develop is taught in year 7 during the topic ‘What is an economy and development?’, built upon in year 8 where we study ‘Are NEEs equal?’ and further built upon via case studies of Africa and Asia in year 9. By the end of KS3 we plan to ensure students appreciate the diversity and complexity of the world we live in.

As a team, we have adapted and created a knowledge rich curriculum that embeds the application of geographical skills alongside the key concepts that they are being taught. With the whole department being involved it has allowed us to have secure and relevant subject knowledge to impart of the students. As classroom teachers we deliver and help students to recall knowledge to understand the ever-changing world. The curriculum builds on prior knowledge and helps to understand topics in a variety of different scales. We also build cultural capital through exposure to different cultures, historical events and current affairs. This ensures that we are not only developing their geographical knowledge but personal development.

At Key Stage Four we teach the AQA GCSE specification to continue to build on and widen the knowledge and skills that the students have acquired at Key Stage Three. Paper 1 units we study develop the students understanding of the physical world, building upon key topics from KS3, including Hazards, Ecosystems and Changing Landscapes. Paper 2 units develop the understanding of human’s interactions with the world, for example, urbanisation, development and sustainability. Finally, Paper 3 develops a synoptic understanding of the world and builds upon their investigation and problem-solving skills. At Key Stage 5 students can continue their studies with the Edexcel specification where units chosen to provide a broad overview of how today has been shaped by historical events and the future will evolve as the processes continue to develop and interact. One of the key synoptic themes we study is the future and uncertainties of climate change and how this impacts coastal communities nationally and internationally. These studies help students to understand the significance of geographical events and world issues.

In Humanities collaborative planning is used to create engaging and challenging learning sequences and enquiries. There is a consistent lesson structure at KS3 and 4 supported by the learning mode icons, with ‘do now’ slides focused on retrieval and recall with knowledge organisers used across subjects to enhance learning and ensure routine with a calm and purposeful start to lessons, this also supports with knowing more and remembering more. Modelling and scaffolding using red and green zone is used to develop written work and resilience. Mini whiteboards increase the ratio of engaged learners in lessons and support responsive teaching. Literacy plays a key part with techniques such as reciprocal reading, questioning, oracy skills and word of the lesson used to develop this begins from year 7, supporting students with the literacy demands required in the humanities subjects at GCSE. Whole class feedback involves identifying common misconceptions and reteaching so students can make better progress. This is seen in books with standardised feedback sheet and purple pen responses. Assessments at KS3 are based on prior and current learning, consisting of MCQ and a mix of short and extended responses. Students receive a % score and the class average to track their progress throughout the year. This feeds into teacher judgements about ARE which are then reported home. At KS4 and 5 assessments are based on exam board materials at the end of topics with standardisation and moderation within the cycle of formal assessments to report home student attainment. Homework is forms-based quizzes at KS3 based around knowledge organisers to improve development of key word use. At KS4 homework is weekly and is revision based to build retrieval skills and resilience. Students at KS5 focus on proactive and reactive tasks to support their learning outside the classroom.