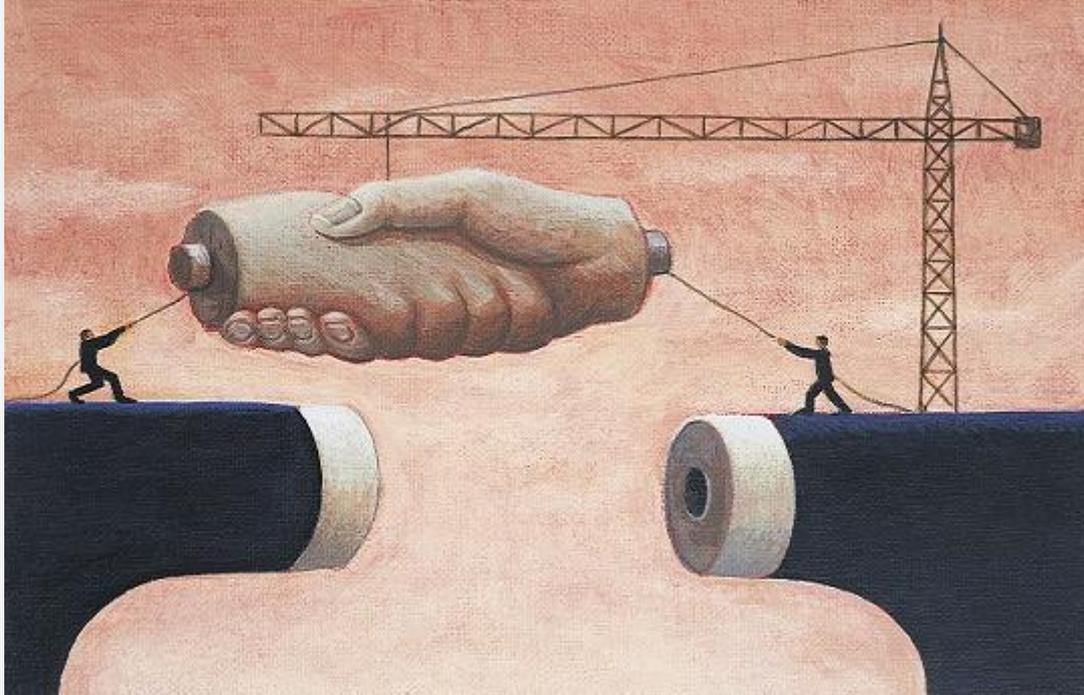


Our Primary Transition Forum: Bridging the KS2-KS3 Divide

POSTED BY TOM SHERRINGTON · JUNE 27, 2015 · 5 COMMENTS



The KS2-KS3 Divide – doesn't bridge itself! Image credit: DIGITAL VISION/PHOTODISC/THINKSTOCK

In the last few weeks we've held two excellent meetings as part of what we call our Primary Transition Forum: one for English; one for Maths. They've both been incredibly interesting, useful and eye-opening. There is so much to learn; so much we don't know about what goes on on the other side of the KS2-KS3 chasm. It's something I go on about all the time – the extent to which teachers from primary and secondary sectors are segregated in their professional lives. The one teacher – one class primary model contrasts so sharply with our highly specialised multi-teacher secondary model and, arguably, the skills and dispositions needed to span the range from Y7 to Y13 are very different to those needed to span from Reception to Year 6. We're different. But not THAT different. Given that our students progress from one domain to the next ever year and occupy space in the same community, and that the curriculum has so many common components, it's ridiculous how little contact teachers have with each other across the divide.

We wanted to change that. Last November we ran our first Transition Forums to explore how useful this could be. Our conclusion was that it is something we need to sustain as part of our routine engagement with our feeder schools; the meetings are part of a process, not one-off events. That's the goal. We've been able to engage in discussions about pedagogy and curriculum that have been amazingly rich both in terms of information sharing at a time of change and in terms of a deeper understanding of pedagogical sequencing and standards. Our Maths forum included teachers from five primary schools and about four HGS staff; the English forum was attended by staff from two feeder schools and three of us from HGS. From our perspective, we'd learn a lot from just one school but with more you get a sense of the range of practice between schools; they have a great deal in common although some seem to be more confident with pitching the

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content higher earlier within KS1 and KS2. It's exciting working with someone like Tanya Watson, Head of [William Tyndale Primary School](#) in Islington, pushing the standards agenda with great drive and passion and showing what can be done. Our challenge is to take her students on with the same level of drive so they don't experience a gap at all.

Some of the issues we've discussed include the following:

General:

- The end of SATs and the new tests coming in from 2016. Primary colleagues are still finding out about the precise structure and content of these new tests.
- The general trend towards teaching more difficult concepts to younger children. KS2 colleagues were repeatedly telling us that a certain topic or concept used to be in Y6 but is now in Y4; Y4 content is now beginning in Y2 and so on. We discussed how this 'raising the bar' process works in practice and the likelihood that cohorts may stretch out wider as higher KS1 attainers progress faster whilst lower KS1 attainers continue to wrestle with more basic concepts. The floor might rise but might the range also expand? That's something we need to anticipate.
- The general pattern of 'dips' between years. There is a summer break factor and a peak performance factor between all years – even within primary schools from year to year. The Y6-Y7 transition needs to take account of these factors; examples of best work will be a useful guide to peak performance but the need to gear up is inevitable. We need a balance of consolidation and pushing on so that students continue to experience stretch and challenge – but we need to consider stretch through breadth, depth and mastery within a topic as well as moving on to new concepts.
- Removing levels will force us (happily) to consider the transition in terms of content and work samples and not the levels... that tired old process of casting doubt on the validity of the assessment in NC levels will go. However, secondary staff will need to learn the ropes with the new scale so that it makes sense relative to the way students' aptitudes manifest themselves in our context. There was enthusiasm from primary colleagues for the [Learning Ladders software](#) that facilitates tracking of assessment in highly adaptable format. Over time we will need to engage in routine moderation activities between KS2 and KS3, especially with writing.

Maths

We talked about:

- place value and the power of the pattern of families: 1,10,100 and extending the range of number students are expected to handle routinely
- partition methods for arithmetic/multiplication
- the new emphasis on arithmetic in general; the 'how do you know?' questions are less prominent; questions are more purely arithmetical and abstract with long sections of the new tests given to this.
- the use of calculators – essentially it seems that it is secondary schools that introduce calculator dependency and we need to address that across our curriculum
- the use of concrete resources such as dienes blocks seems to fade out prematurely. We all agreed that we needed to focus on students' concrete understanding of number, building stronger mental models and that concrete resources can support learning for students at all levels.



Dienes blocks. Image via Amazon.

- the concept of proof and 'show that' questions. This is coming into KS2 more strongly.

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- a range of specific areas where less confident children struggle – eg with times tables – as discussed in this [earlier post about mental models in maths](#).
- spiralling, marking and feedback and the need to have a good understanding of the next steps children need to take rather than always moving them on to new material – different ways to move sideways as well as forwards.

We exchanged books and curriculum plans; showed our text books and assessments and agreed to trial a process with one of our feeder schools whereby all the children bring us their most recent Year 6 maths book in September. We will evaluate how useful this is by looking at the books over the first few weeks of term as we get to know our students.

English

We discussed the following:

- Atomised responsibility for writing: At KS2, the one teacher- one class model creates the environment for writing to be developed across a range of genres with a common and coherent focus on standards of writing, grammar and so on. At KS3, this responsibility falls too heavily on the English teachers who don't see their students as much; we need to work harder to develop a shared sense of responsibility for writing across departments with stronger common standards and a shared understanding of the expectations we have of students.
- Exemplars are key. Descriptors are problematic. We looked at some Islington exemplars for expected writing in Y5 and Y6 and exceeding Y6. These were 'published' pieces – ie based on scaffolding and redrafting. The standards are high; the exemplars showed some highly sophisticated structures.
- The issue of meeting all or some of the curriculum objectives to meet a standard; some primaries are going for All – but that's demanding.
- Examples of bar raising: the use of apostrophes for possession being taught in Y2; the expectation of 'convincing metaphors' in Y5/6 – as opposed to any metaphor.
- Authentic vs forced writing. The notion of 'fake it to make it' – ie many children need to use structures that are unfamiliar and unnatural relative to their normal speech prior to adopting them more instinctively. This can lead to writing feeling forced. There is a maturation process with writing – authenticity flows with it – but children can be taught to use the structures earlier.
- Are authenticity and maturation fundamentally linked to frequency and breadth of reading? At William Tyndale, they're placing more emphasis on reading now, having worked a lot on writing; reading in a 'forensic' style to tease out the structures and vocabulary – alongside reading for pleasure.
- Does topic immersion generate better writing? As the content is richer, children appear to be more naturally inclined to include it in their writing and, crucially, they focus on drafting specific pieces of work for longer. This is more possible at KS2 through topic based work where literacy and content inter-link; it's an issue for us to consider at KS3. eg in History, linking content to the quality of writing in a 3 hour per fortnight cycle is more challenging.
- The terminology of grammar. This is not even firmly understood by teachers or used consistently from KS3-KS5. eg articles vs determiners. (an article being just one type of determiner).
- Reading recovery/acceleration. At primary school, one-to-one reading and guided reading are routine in some schools depending on students' needs. One school sets 30 mins reading homework per day. At HGS our resources are possibly spread too thinly. Should we focus on fewer students so they get more intensive one-to-one reading support every day? Should we do even more to develop a culture of reading, again not just focused on the English department.
- Guided reading methods: the role of the questioner, summariser and so on – something more KS3 teachers could do.

I haven't captured everything here. We covered a lot in 90 minutes. We've agreed to trial the process of asking our new intake to bring with them at least one piece of 'published' writing to show us what they can. I love this idea of publishing – of writing up best work. If we have these reminders stuck in books, teachers and students will have concrete information about baseline standards in Year 7 to refer back to.

We've just started this process. We all expressed a commitment to continuing with it in the long-term. Our next Forum will be held at one of the primary schools.

In looking into this area I've found this resource from Michael Tidd @MichaelT1979 incredibly helpful. I'm going to make sure my staff have a copy. Click the link to download from the TES site.

Curriculum Overview for Year 5

English Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply knowledge of morphology & etymology when reading new words Reading & discuss a broad range of genres & texts Familiarity & discussing themes Make recommendations to others Learn poetry by heart Draw inferences & make predictions Discuss author's use of language Retrieve & present information from non-fiction texts Formal presentations & debates 			Art & Design (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use sketchbooks to collect, record, review, revisit & evaluate ideas Improve mastery of techniques such as drawing, painting and sculpture with varied materials Learn about great artists, architects & designers 			Computing (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design & write programs to solve problems Use sequences, repetition, inputs, variables and outputs in programs Debug & correct errors in programs Understand uses of networks for collaboration & communication Be discerning in evaluating digital content 					
Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure spelling, inc. homophones, prefixes, silent letters, etc. Use a thesaurus Juggle, fluent handwriting Plan writing to suit audience & purpose Develop character, setting and atmosphere in narrative Use organisational & presentational features Use consistent appropriate tenses Perform own compositions 			Grammar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use expanded noun phrases Use modal & passive verbs Use relative clauses Use commas for clarity Use brackets, dashes & commas for parenthesis Speaking & Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use well-structured explanations Command of Standard English Consider & evaluate different viewpoints Use appropriate register 			Design & Technology (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research & criteria to develop products which are fit for purpose and aimed at specific groups Use annotated sketches, cross-section diagrams & computer-aided design Analyse & evaluate existing products and improve own work Use mechanical & electrical systems in new products, including programming Cook savoury dishes for a healthy & varied diet 			Geography (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name & locate countries, seas, regions & features of UK Understand latitude, longitude, Equator, hemispheres, TROPICS, polar circles & time zones Study a region of Europe, and of the Americas Understand biomes, vegetation belts, land use, economic activity, distribution of resources, etc. Use 4- and 6-figure grid references on OS map Use fieldwork to record & explain areas 		
Mathematics Geometry & Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convert between different units Calculate perimeter of composite shapes & area of rectangles Calculate volume & capacity Identify 3-D shapes Measure & identify angles Understand regular polygons Reflect & translate shapes Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpret tables & line graphs Write questions about line graphs 			Fractions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare & order fractions Add & subtract fractions with common denominators, with mixed numbers Multiply fractions by units Write decimals as fractions Order & round decimal numbers Write percentages to fractions & decimals 			Modern Languages (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen & engage Engage in conversations, expressing opinions Speak in simple language & be understood Develop appropriate pronunciation Present ideas & information orally Show understanding in simple reading Adapt known language to create new ideas Describe people, places & things Understand basic grammar, e.g. gender 			Music (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform with control & expression solo & in assemblies Improvise & compose using dimensions of music Listen to detail and recall aurally Use & understand basics of staff notation Develop an understanding of the history of music, including great musicians & composers 		
Science Biology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life cycles of plants Animals (inc. mammal, insect, bird, amphibian) Describe changes in humans (development & mature) Chemistry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classify materials according to a variety of properties Understand measures & solutions Know about reversible changes; identify irreversible Physics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand location and interaction of Sun, Earth & Moon Introduce gravity, resistance & mechanical forces 			History British History (taught chronologically) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anglo-Saxons & Vikings, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range withdrawal from Britain; Scott invasion Invasions, architecture & kingdoms Viking invasions; Danelaw Edward the Confessor Broader History Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient Greece, i.e. A study of Greek life and achievements and their influence on the western world 			Physical Education (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use running, jumping, catching and throwing in isolation and in combination Play competitive games, applying basic principles Develop flexibility & control in gymnastics, dance & athletics Take part in Outdoor & Adventurous activities Compare performances to achieve personal bests Swimming proficiency at 25m (KS2 or KS2) 			Religious Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to follow locally-agreed syllabus for RE 		

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Curriculum Overview for Year 6

English Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read a broad range of genres Recommend books to others Make comparisons within various texts Support inferences with evidence Summarising key points from texts Identify how language, structure, etc. contribute to meaning Discuss use of language, etc. figurative Discuss & explain reading, providing reasoned justifications for views 			Art & Design (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use sketchbooks to collect, record, review, revisit & evaluate ideas Improve mastery of techniques such as drawing, painting and sculpture with varied materials Learn about great artists, architects & designers 			Computing (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design & write programs to solve problems Use sequences, repetition, inputs, variables and outputs in programs Debug & correct errors in programs Understand uses of networks for collaboration & communication Be discerning in evaluating digital content 					
Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use knowledge of morphology & etymology in spelling Develop logical personal handwriting style Plan writing to suit audience & purpose; use models of writing Develop character & setting in narrative Select grammar & vocabulary for effect Use a wide range of cohesive devices Ensure grammatical consistency 			Grammar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use appropriate register/style Use the passive voice for purpose Use features to convey & clarify meaning Use full punctuation Use language of subject/object Speaking & Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use questions to build knowledge Articulate arguments & opinions Use spoken language to speculate, justify opinion, persuade & explore Use appropriate register & language 			Design & Technology (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research & criteria to develop products which are fit for purpose and aimed at specific groups Use annotated sketches, cross-section diagrams & computer-aided design Analyse & evaluate existing products and improve own work Use mechanical & electrical systems in new products, including programming Cook savoury dishes for a healthy & varied diet 			Geography (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name & locate countries, seas, regions & features of UK Understand latitude, longitude, Equator, hemispheres, tropics, polar circles & time zones Study a region of Europe, and of the Americas Understand biomes, vegetation belts, land use, economic activity, distribution of resources, etc. Use 4- and 6-figure grid references on OS map Use fieldwork to record & explain areas 		
Mathematics Geometry & Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidently use a range of measures & conversions Calculate area of triangles / parallelograms Use area & volume formulae Classify shapes by properties Move and use angle rules Enlarge & reflect shapes, using all four quadrants Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use pie charts Calculate mean averages 			Fractions, decimals & percentages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare & simplify fractions Use equivalents to add fractions Multiply simple fractions Divide fractions by whole numbers Write problems using decimals & percentages Write written division up to 200 Use ratio, proportion 			Modern Languages (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen & engage Engage in conversations, expressing opinions Speak in simple language & be understood Develop appropriate pronunciation Present ideas & information orally Show understanding in simple reading Adapt known language to create new ideas Describe people, places & things Understand basic grammar, e.g. gender 			Music (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform with control & expression solo & in assemblies Improvise & compose using dimensions of music Listen to detail and recall aurally Use & understand basics of staff notation Develop an understanding of the history of music, including great musicians & composers 		
Science Biology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classification, including micro-organisms Health & Lifestyle, incl. circulatory system Evolution & Adaptation Physics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light & Shadows; the eye Forces, including gravity Electricity: investigating circuits 			History British History (taught chronologically) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An extended period study, e.g. The changing power of monarchs Significant turning points in British history Domesday Book Crusades Broader History Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-European societies, i.e. Islamic civilisation, including Alghadir African civilisation Latin (West Africa) 			Physical Education (UKS2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use running, jumping, catching and throwing in isolation and in combination Play competitive games, applying basic principles Develop flexibility & control in gymnastics, dance & athletics Take part in Outdoor & Adventurous activities Compare performances to achieve personal bests Swimming proficiency at 25m (KS2 or KS2) 			Religious Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to follow locally-agreed syllabus for RE 		

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An excellent summary of the primary curriculum by Michael Tidd via TES Resources.