

Making the most of Curriculum Maestro

Queen Emma's Primary School in Witney, Oxfordshire, adopted the Cornerstones Curriculum in 2016. Last year, the school began using the new online platform, Curriculum Maestro, to design, deliver and manage their curriculum and are already seeing significant benefits.



Getting started

The headteacher at Queen Emma's Primary, Vicky Musson, was one of the first school leaders to trial Curriculum Maestro back in summer 2019 and recognised its potential right from the start. *'When I first saw Maestro, I was incredibly excited, but I don't*

think I was expecting what it looks like now. I didn't realise the functions were going to develop and be as advanced as they are.'

Curriculum intent

Vicky kickstarted her curriculum plan using the curriculum statement and principles section on Maestro. Here, she defined the school's curriculum intent based on its context and inclusive approach: *'It's a Mary Myatt phrase: 'Our curriculum is an explicit and deliberate guarantor of equality'. So, whatever we do is to ensure that we secure equity and equality.'* To support this, Vicky wanted the curriculum to have a well-designed structure. *'Our curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for the next stage of education.'*

Sharing the vision

Vicky then worked quickly to make sure that staff shared the curriculum vision. *'You need to reassure everybody, remind everybody and share the rationale behind why we're doing what we are doing.'* She also ensured that teachers had logged in and were using Maestro in their day to day planning, teaching and assessment to deliver the school's intended curriculum programme.

Accessing content and resources

Having taught the Cornerstones Curriculum for over three years, Queen Emma's was already familiar with most of the projects housed on Maestro. However, Vicky is excited by the subject depth offered

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by the new knowledge-rich projects (KRPs) which will be added to Maestro over the coming months: *'The new knowledge-rich projects support our curriculum intent and we're incredibly excited to add them to our curriculum. We know that to be creative, we need knowledge. The children definitely have more knowledge now and are very, very confident.'*

The teaching resources are valued by staff and are easily accessible now, on Curriculum Maestro, within each lesson area. Vicky is impressed with the new knowledge organisers and says that they are particularly helpful for teaching assistants. *'We're expecting them to support those children in their learning and they need to know that knowledge as well.'* The glossaries and word mats are also helping to extend children's vocabulary, as reading is a top priority in the school.

Ensuring coverage and progression

With their curriculum projects in place, Maestro gives Vicky and her team the ability to see actual, not just intended, coverage and progression in school. This is one of Vicky's favourite features, as it helps staff to quickly spot and fill in any gaps in coverage. The whole task of subject leadership has been made much smoother since using it. *'We don't have subject leaders at our school, because it's all on Curriculum Maestro. Instead, we have assistant school leaders that oversee each Key Stage. We've had discussions in past meetings, that intended coverage doesn't necessarily mean actual coverage, so making sure that there's some consistency across the Key Stage is important.'*

Ofsted's curriculum focus

The school's last inspection was in September 2018, where they were judged as 'good' after many years of dedicated school improvement work. Vicky is confident that Queen Emma's Primary School is more than meeting the new inspection requirements, particularly as the focus has shifted towards the quality of education and curriculum. *'All of your teachers need to know what went before and what's coming after in the curriculum. Maestro enables teachers to log on and see that, so I'm really excited. I'm quite looking forward to Ofsted coming back in.'*

A consistent approach

As well as being the headteacher at Queen Emma's, Vicky is the Director of Education across the Mill Academy Trust and has ensured that both primary sites are using Curriculum Maestro for a joined-up approach. Staff regularly plan together, and the subject leaders from the linked secondary, The Henry Box School, also get involved. School leaders are as excited about Curriculum Maestro as Vicky. *'They are really interested in the lesson builder, which allows teachers to adapt and edit lesson content and sequencing.'*

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Vicky has also shared Curriculum Maestro with the educational leadership expert, Professor John West-Burnham, who is Chair of Board at the Mill Academy Trust, *'He was so impressed with it and likened it to great education systems abroad. He spoke about how it standardises and raises the expectation, creating consistency across schools.'*

Making it right for the school

Like many primary schools, Queen Emma's teaches classes with children from mixed age groups. Vicky finds that the functionality of Curriculum Maestro supports age-related teaching. *'Maestro enables us to give each year group a different diet within the curriculum. It helps us to do that when we look at the intended progression of the programmes of study.'*

Vicky finds the curriculum gap identifying feature very useful, along with the flexibility to add in bespoke projects written for the school. *'We've already put the Daily Mile onto Maestro, because that meets some of the gaps that we may have. It's really exciting.'*

As the school has prioritised reading, wellbeing and inclusion, Vicky wanted to ensure consistency and reliability in the curriculum. Curriculum Maestro helps to give her that reassurance. To meet the children's diverse needs, there are many important interventions in place that need to run smoothly. *'The Cornerstones Curriculum is just one part of the wider curriculum offered at Queen Emma's Primary School.'*

Looking to the future

Vicky and her staff have been impressed with the amount of time and workload that Curriculum Maestro has saved them. They look forward to seeing their curriculum go from strength to strength, supporting all children, whatever their backgrounds or needs, to learn and grow.

'Our success is a testament to everybody's work here. It's such a great team and we have worked incredibly hard, but we've worked hard on the right things for our context.' says Vicky.

We wish Vicky, her staff and the children continued success and happiness for the future.



Queen Emma's Primary School