

Pupil Voice – teacher and children co-construct the learning [around the teacher’s objectives]. Children make decisions about how to do something and through discussion and distributed leadership these are woven into the learning by the teacher. Because of this, there is a sense of agency and motivation to learn. Relationships between teacher and children are strong when working in this way Children talk about Mantle to visitors on Study Days and leaders reflect on their comments. Interviews with quieter children or children new to Woodrow had an impact on teaching. This was followed up by lesson study which showed that quieter children are learning through this process.

Teaching and learning theories – Mantle draws on the theories of Bruner and Vygotsky. The drama based method is a sequence of highly planned, active classroom tasks that lead learners into an imaginary, emotional and intellectual relationship with the curriculum. This approach offers the children power to influence learning and the class ‘buy in’ to the curriculum which leads to deep learning experiences. Narrative is a strong element of the work which is advocated by Hirsch.
<https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/blog-post/the-paradox-of-mantle-of-the-expert-how-can-children-be-experts/>

Long term learning outcomes – Mantle is concerned with short-term cognitive gains and acquisition of knowledge within longer term educational goals. The contexts explored lead to genuine conversations about real life situations; beliefs are shared and explored as well as respected. The responsible team in Mantle is concerned with the values of care and respect. They learn to deal with cause and consequence; tension and justice. The intended outcomes play their part in developing personal fulfilment and well-being. They begin to contribute to social justice and inclusion.

Inclusion and equity – Mantle is an approach which provides rich learning opportunities for all learners. As described by Hart et al, we are a community of learners with the principles of co-agency, trust and everybody at the core. Teacher and learner share responsibility for learning without a predetermined limit on ability. Opportunities for learning are planned which will be part of a shared experience where everyone is important.

Why Mantle of the Expert is at the heart of our curriculum
Reflecting on Pedagogy [2018]

Prior learning and experience – teachers constantly reflect, assess and adapt when teaching with Mantle; this enables high expectations to be the norm. Language and dialogue is central to the work as the client, or the team, or the tension demands more of the children. Whilst Mantle frames the children as experts, teachers are vigilant in their assessment of knowledge in order to address any misconceptions which may become evident.

Assessment for learning - Mantle has formative assessment embedded within it. The dialogic nature of the teaching means that achievement is elicited and interpreted in order to make timely decisions about the next steps. The client plays a central role in providing feedback. There are always high expectations from the client and children want to respond. As teachers of Mantle of the Expert, our practice is constantly observed and feedback has a direct impact on the children.

Developing higher order thinking and metacognition using dialogue and questioning – as a dramatic inquiry based approach, learning in Mantle is driven by a series of inquiry questions. Mantle uses a combination of higher and lower order questions to generate successful learning. Mantle is dialogic – it harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend children’s thinking.

Range of teaching techniques – Mantle requires teachers to draw on a range of strategies when teaching with Mantle. Whole class, structured group work, guided learning and individual activity are all integral to this way of learning. The class is constantly moving in and out of the fictive context which they are creating in order to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to complete a task. The fiction creates a purpose for curriculum learning.

Scaffolding pupil learning – the careful structuring of tasks moves children along a continuum in Mantle from attraction to productive obsession. Intellectual, social and emotional support provides scaffolds for learning. The work is linked to research by Kim and Hannafin and Puntambekar and Kolodner – namely solving problems. Tasks are deliberate and inquiry based; problem identification, exploration, reconstruction, presentation and communication, and reflection and negotiation.