

Thematic Approach

A thematic approach is used where a school/year group decide on a theme for the term, for example “space” and decide to focus the learning around this. Teachers will then choose the skills from the curriculum and work these skills around the theme, such as creating a space cart in DT to tick the designing box. There are many different schemes, such as corner-stones, that complete a lot of the work and many schools use schemes such as these, however, with the new curriculum fast approaching, schools are slowly moving away from these schemes of work.

There are many pros and cons to using a thematic approach, as found In the table below. (Edtechians.com, 2018)

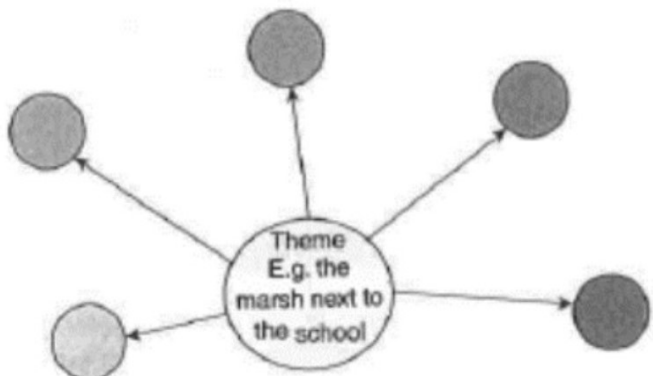
Pros	Cons
Makes the learning more fun and engages the learners more	Some pupils may lose intrest in the theme if it does not intrest them.
Increases curiosity to motivate learners. Pupils who are more curious want to discover more	Some pupils may miss content and skills if they are absent from school.
Teaches children how to learn. Its not the content that matters, it’s the skills needed to find the content.	

A thematic approach is the most common approach found in the primary school classroom. The majority of schools choose a theme for the term, and plan around this. This is what the author has personally seen on placement. According to Barnes, a thematic approach is where a relevant theme is chosen to “generate learning in a variety of subjects”. (Barnes, 2012)

Numeracy, Literacy and Digital Competency can fit into a theme based approach and can be delivered effectively for the skills within these frameworks to be developed.

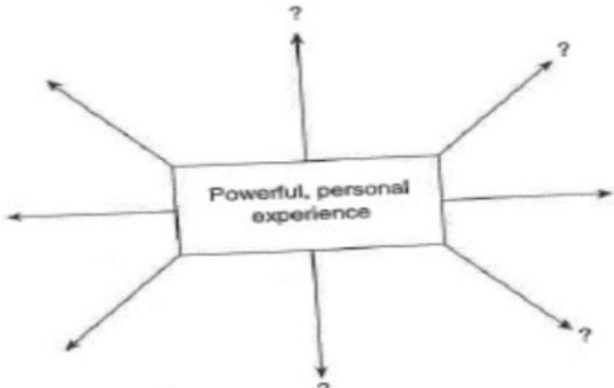
I have decided to use the theme of space to base my example on. Space is a widely taught them and one where you can fit a lot of elements of the curriculum and frameworks into. My intended age is Year 5 in Key Stage 2.

Numeracy	Select and use suitable instruments and units of measurement (Welsh Government, 2014) Pupils will use units of measurements to measure distances between planets
Literacy	Explore the layout of web pages to create material using available tools (Welsh Government, 2014) Pupils will create a webpage news article about the moon landing
Digital Competence	Combine a range of multimedia components to produce an appropriate outcome (Welsh Government, 2016) Pupils will record a news report based on the moon landing.



A diagram showing theme based learning approach (Barnes, 2012)

Cross-Curricular Learning 1600242



A diagram showing opportunistic learning. (Barnes, 2012)

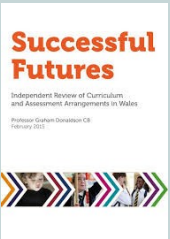
Opportunistic

Opportunistic learning is very much learner led. Students can dictate the depth that they would like to explore a theme or topic that the teacher has chosen. The teacher is still the main dicstator of information, however the children decide what they want to know. These lessons tend to have an element of surprise within them, as the learners direct the learning in the direction which they want it to go. An opportunistic learning experience is often unpredictable, and, according to Barnes (2012), “... exploits unpredictable and child-led learning opportunities arising from a powerful and shared experience.”

An opportunistic approach fits in with Donaldsons vision of “ambitious and capable learners” (Donaldson, 2015). For learners to lead their own learning and direct what they want to study is a great example of what Donaldson and the Welsh curriculum is moving to in 2022.

As with any cross-curricular approach, there are pros and cons that teachers should think about before adopting the approach.

Pros	Cons
Child centred learning. Children direct their own learning and learn what they would like	Some children may get bored and wont engage in the work if the learning isn't going in the direction they would like
Teacher can pick the theme, however the pupils dictate the depth they want to explore it in.	Teachers need to be fully committed if adopting this type of approach, which sometimes isn't the case.



Below is an example of how Numeracy, Literacy and Digital Competence could work in an opportunistic approach. All the skills mentioned are linked to the LNF and DCF Frameworks. The theme I have chosen is “Wales”. Pupils will get

Numeracy	Realise that budgeting is important. Pupils will compare budgets from Wale and a family in Africa. Pupils will dictate the depth of the budget and depth of knowledge from Africa.
Literacy	Identify and explore ideas and information that interest them. Pupils will explore information they want to know about Wales and a country of their choice and record the information.
Digital Competence	Explain why it is important to discuss their use of technology with an adult, <i>e.g. discuss aspects of positive and negative reputation</i> Pupils will discuss how using social media impacts their friendships and reputations. Pupils will also look at how other countries are portrayed in the media and consider the reputations of these countries