



A More Creative Curriculum  
Open Futures at Camberwell Park Specialist Support School



“Working with Open Futures has allowed us to bring practical learning to the forefront of our teaching in a way that has given our children a voice, developed new skills and embraced new technology. It has given them the opportunity to engage in experiences they would otherwise not have been able to have.”

Mary Isherwood, Headteacher  
Camberwell Park Specialist Support School

## Forewords

In different parts of the country, Open Futures is having a profoundly beneficial impact on the lives of children and teachers. Combining educational rigour with a highly practical approach, it is a highly engaging way to improve achievement, attainment and motivation.

The success of Open Futures is vividly illustrated in the story of Camberwell Park Specialist School. Using Open Futures as an underpinning philosophy, as well as a way to guide learning and teaching, the school has made great strides in recent years. It stands as a beacon to other schools, both locally and nationally.

Despite the best efforts of politicians, policymakers and teachers, there is no ‘silver bullet’ when it comes to raising achievement. Many different approaches work. However, Open Futures is breaking new ground and is, undoubtedly, generating high levels of motivation.

At a time when concerns are expressed about the narrowing of the curriculum, Open Futures allows teachers to be creative and pupils to exercise intellectual and practical skills. I commend it warmly, with the hope that many more schools across the country will take it up.

*Sir David Bell KCB, Vice-Chancellor  
University of Reading*

Our education system is dominated by accountability pressures and the standards agenda but what Open Futures achieves for all is a collective purpose that transcends the traditional school curriculum. This booklet contains inspiring stories about what a school community can achieve when it works together in pursuit of excellence.

We read about the impact of each strand of the Open Futures offer, including philosophy, cookery, filming and horticulture. Within this booklet we see what is possible when we look beyond the traditional curriculum to offer meaningful experiences that offer lifelong impact.

I am proud to be a trustee of Open Futures and to support the work of this important charity. I hope that through reading the story of Camberwell Park Specialist Support School, colleagues will take the opportunity to reflect on what may be possible within their own setting. Children deserve to experience the full breadth of the curriculum in an inclusive and enabling environment. Open Futures exists to make that aspiration a reality for as many children as possible.

*Dame Alison Peacock, Executive Headteacher  
The Wroxham School*

## Welcome to Open Futures

Before Sir David Bell kindly agreed to become a trustee of The Open Futures Trust, the first question he asked me was, “What is the main reason that headteachers want to take on the Open Futures approach?” The message repeated to me over ten years by headteachers up and down the country has consistently been based on deeply held values: a responsibility and commitment to provide their children with experiences that they may not otherwise be able to access, to ensure that they discover their capabilities and that they leave their school with achievements that will give them the skills and confidence for their learning and their lives ahead.

Open Futures, initiated in 2005 by the Helen Hamlyn Trust, is grounded in extensive research and best practice. It has evolved over ten years but has always had children’s learning at its core. Developed with schools for schools, what makes Open Futures unique is the framework we have developed, the process and training, which remain flexible and able to respond to individual schools’ needs. This personalisation leads to effective whole-school engagement. Findings show that the Open Futures approach improves learning, teaching and pupil motivation; raises aspirations; and provides pupils with the confidence to be responsible for shaping their own futures and developing an ‘I can’ attitude.

At the heart of our vision is to bring learning to life for young children and, importantly, to invite them to ask questions to help shape their learning. Learning that is hands-on, relevant and provides tangible outcomes enables children to apply, practice and understand why what they are learning is important.

Camberwell Park is a specialist support school. Since starting out on its Open Futures journey, we have

talked, mentored, helped and learned from each other. This is how Open Futures likes to work and this is why we wanted to share this with you.

I was inspired by the way that staff at Camberwell Park embraced the Open Futures approach and made it their own. We worked closely together to ensure that our trainers were clear about the needs of the children and staff. Staff at Camberwell introduced particular communication tools and applications to ensure that all the children were able to participate and learn from their experiences. It was a true collaboration, which all good learning experiences are.

This publication has been developed with the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art, and sees two of the Helen Hamlyn Trust’s major projects collaborating for the first time. While it celebrates Camberwell Park’s success, I hope that it also shows how Open Futures can be woven through a school’s curriculum to extend learning contexts and opportunities for children, staff, parents and the community.

*Lucy O’Rorke, Open Futures Trust*

## Welcome to Camberwell Park School

I am delighted to represent the staff, pupils and extended family of Camberwell Park School in welcoming you to this joint publication with the Open Futures Trust. We are really proud of our achievements and grateful for this opportunity to celebrate and share them with you. We hope you will enjoy reading our story.

*Mary Isherwood, Headteacher  
Camberwell Park Specialist Support School*

## About this book

The close collaboration between Camberwell Park and The Open Futures Trust has resulted in an exciting, creative and imaginative curriculum for all of the learners and staff at the school. The same is true in Open Futures schools of all shapes and sizes nationally. This publication tells the story of Camberwell Park School's journey, and is intended to help others, who may be new to Open Futures, to understand the collaborative approach used to introduce and shape Open Futures training and implementation in schools. Camberwell Park, as a specialist support school, illustrates this process particularly well, owing to the complex needs of the children and the demands on staff.

The story is told through a mixture of the personal and the technical. Reflections from teachers and the insights of trainers and parents sit alongside curriculum diagrams and lesson plans. It shows the deep, multi-faceted nature of Open Futures when applied with imagination and courage by school leaders, staff and the wider school community, and the important impact it can have on children's lives. Whether you are a headteacher, teacher, governor, teaching assistant or parent carer, we hope you will be inspired.

**“What I always say to parents, carers and visitors is that ours is a school like any other school in the context that the children have access to all areas of the curriculum and our focus is on their learning and achievement.”**

*Mary Isherwood, Headteacher  
Camberwell Park Specialist Support School*

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## What is Open Futures?

**“All children can experience that ‘I can do this’ moment.”**

*Karen Carter, Headteacher,  
Cheetham CofE Community Academy School, Manchester*

Open Futures is a teacher CPD programme that helps teachers to build children's ability 'to think and to do'. It develops skills of enquiry, both as an end in itself and to underpin learning in three other strands of practical activity - cooking, gardening and digital filmmaking.

These learning strands (*askit*, *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit*) are used to help deliver a school's existing curriculum. The hands-on learning they provide gives children a sense of purpose and develops an understanding of the world around them - something many teachers and parents feel is lacking in today's education system, where so much teaching is about passing tests. However, many schools that adopt Open Futures see increased academic learning outcomes for their pupils.

Through the integration of engaging, practical and relevant activities into the learning environment, children gain access to contexts which enable independent learning and the acquisition of fundamental life skills and knowledge. The Open Futures approach enables teachers to plan learning experiences which raise attainment in literacy, numeracy, science and technology. It allows all learners to engage and contribute positively to the classroom, the school and the community.

## How does it work?

The precise combination of training in the different strands, and the amount of senior leadership support required, is dependent on the individual school's needs.

The Open Futures team seeks to work with schools across all areas. CPD courses are provided with a focus on the individual strands to begin with. The emphasis is on building teachers' skills and confidence so that they are able to plan creative learning experiences appropriate to the needs of their children.

Open Futures is not an 'add-on'. Through the training provided, teachers develop the skills to link the four strands together, helping their school's curriculum to become a well-structured 'whole learning experience'.

### Key Open Futures Objectives: Engage, Inspire, Learn, Succeed

#### Mission:

To engage and inspire children to want to learn, to develop an 'I can' attitude and to succeed in life.

The Open Futures programme comprises three key elements:

- Professional advice and mentoring for senior leadership teams.
- High-quality teacher CPD on thinking skills, developed in partnership with Philosophy for Children. This enquiry-led approach is called *askit*.
- A programme of skills-based training for teachers in three educational strands: gardening (*growit*), cooking (*cookit*) and digital filmmaking (*filmit*)

## Four interconnected strands

Open Futures builds on a belief that creative reflection is essential to deep learning, which is why enquiry-based learning is so important. Enquiry is a mode of learning that is stimulated by a desire or a need to know something. Enquiry-based learning is introduced throughout the school via the *askit* strand and informs the whole Open Futures approach to learning and teaching.

The *askit* strand was developed with the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE), based on its Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme. Research has clearly established that P4C is very effective in raising academic achievement. The *askit* strand links all of the other strands and coexists as part of each of them.

Open Futures has focused on attainment, ensuring its application right across the curriculum, hence the benefits and greater impact when all staff are trained and it becomes part of how all teachers teach and all children learn.

Over the years, schools have advised, and evaluation has shown, that beginning the adoption of Open Futures with *askit* as the underpinning pedagogy establishes the approach successfully and engages all staff. At Camberwell Park, as we will see, *askit* came after the skills-based strands. While not typical, that was the right approach for that school.

While many other gardening and cooking programmes exist in schools, it is the close mapping of the school development plan and the curriculum to Open Futures that brings our success, particularly as children often struggle to transfer learning across subject boundaries unless teachers make these lines explicit.

Wellcome Trust, 2005





## askit

*askit* is fundamental to the Open Futures programme as a whole. By helping children to develop their ability to question, to reason, to hypothesise and, above all, to communicate, *askit* has a meaningful role to play not just in terms of primary-level personal development, but also in the way in which it enriches children's approaches to, and experiences of, the practical skills taught through other Open Futures learning strands.

'I wonder'

Aaron



## growit

*growit* helps children to learn about growing and harvesting their own fruit and vegetables, acquire new skills and develop their knowledge of literacy, numeracy and science.

'When our plants grew bigger we had to put them into bigger pots'

Joshua



## cookit

Closely connected with *growit*, the *cookit* strand of Open Futures gives children the opportunity of really understanding where their food comes from and how it relates to who they are, both in terms of their physical development and their well-being.

'I can cut using the bridge'

Kaden



## filmit

Initially developed to support the *growit* and *cookit* strands, *filmit* is an inspiring introduction to the world of digital filmmaking and has evolved into an integral component of the Open Futures programme in its own right.

'Wow! Look at that'

Khertya

## What makes Open Futures so successful?

Open Futures leads children and their teachers through a series of learning journeys that introduce, initiate, consolidate, embed and extend successive building blocks of skills, awareness and confidence to drive learning and teaching across the whole school. One headteacher described it as “a catalyst into new endeavour”.

There is no blueprint for what Open Futures should look like in any particular school. The Open Futures model allows schools to develop the programme as a key driver for their own school improvement plans. Open Futures works with the curriculum in a way that fits the school’s circumstances and the specific needs of its pupils. As a result, schools are able to achieve their outcomes through a broad and balanced curriculum that is well structured, fun and motivating for staff and pupils alike.

### Parents and the community

Often parents lack the confidence or academic ability to become actively involved in their children’s learning. Open Futures offers a wide range of practical ways for parents to participate and begin to forge a relationship with the school. For example, they might help to build raised beds, prepare neglected and over-grown areas for cultivation and water plants during the holidays (*growit*), take part in philosophy groups with their children (*askit*), or get dressed up for a *filmit* Oscars event with food prepared by the children (*cookit*). This all contributes to building positive relationships with parents.

Communities get involved as well - from businesses donating expertise, to community members assisting in lessons. They might offer practical help and expert

advice, attend events or contribute goods and services. *cookit* pupils have been invited to local restaurants to experience different foods and to see professional chefs at work. *filmit* volunteers have set up film clubs while local media companies have arranged school visits. Pupils have been invited to consultations with thinktanks, local authorities and companies to gain their views on specific projects or products for children. This collaborative approach, through project-based learning, gives children opportunities to experience real-world education and see how they can influence outcomes, and provides a platform for enterprise education.

### Quality Mark and Flagship Schools programme

The Open Futures Quality Mark provides a structure for progression for schools implementing Open Futures. It helps to advise and guide schools through the process of implementing and embedding the Open Futures approach sustainably. The Quality Mark articulates the success factors that have been seen and evaluated in schools since the programme began in 2005. It helps schools to plan and collate their evidence - always useful when Ofsted are visiting - and helps support sustainability in the long term.

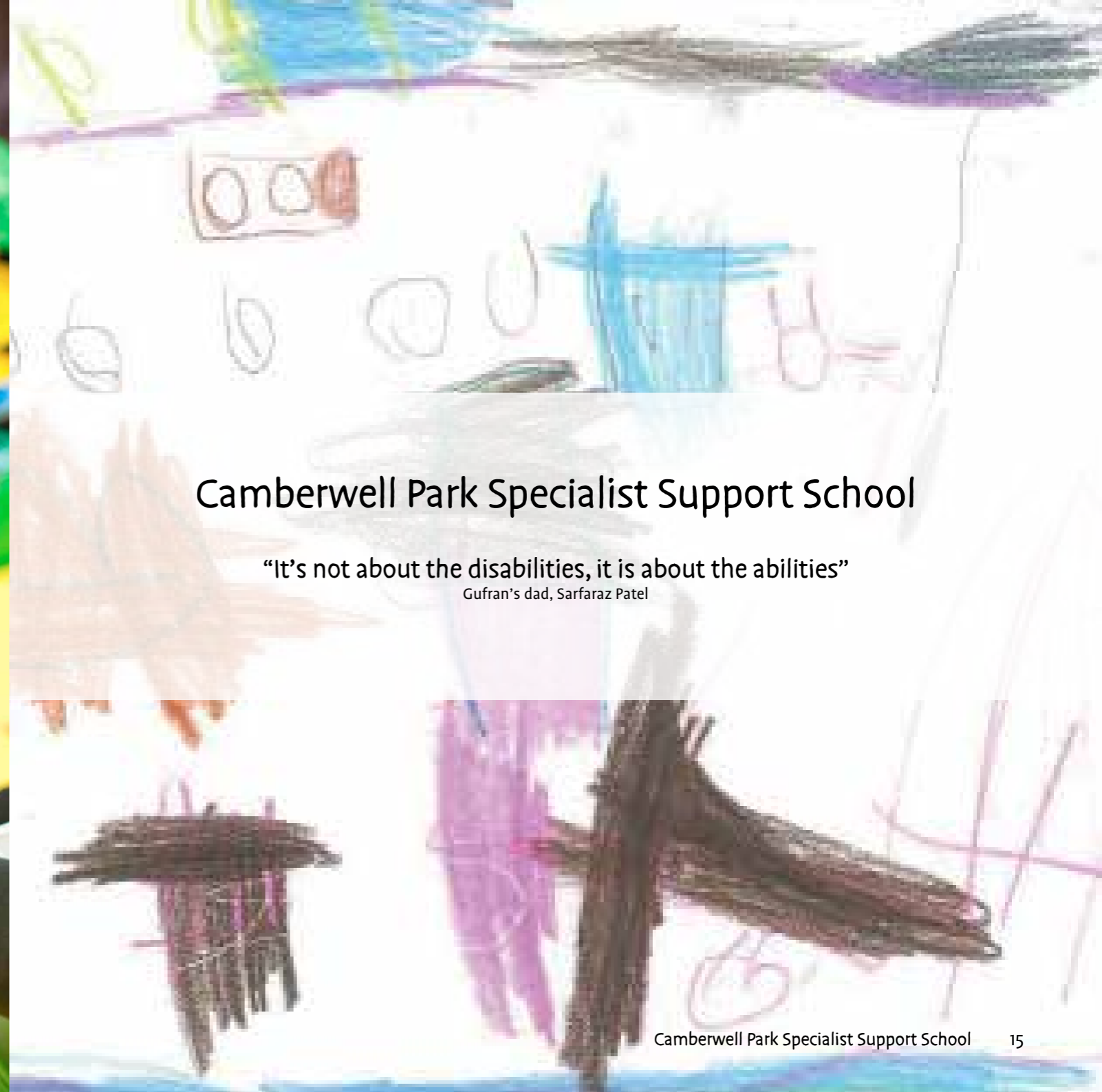
The Open Futures Trust has introduced a Flagship School status to formally recognise excellent practice and set a standard. The Trust created a network of schools with which it works closely to develop and promote initiatives which help to extend the effectiveness of the programme. Open Futures Flagship Schools are independently assessed.

“The emphasis on thinking and enquiry, practical, creative, making skills helps children to be more in charge of their own learning, whilst increasing their engagement, confidence, motivation and ultimately, their achievement. This flexible model that allows for better teacher interpretation of the curriculum, can generate a wider range of outcomes and be more sustainable than more prescriptive models.”

Professor David Leat, Core findings, Newcastle University Summary Evaluation Report (2009)

“[Like Learning without limits] Open Futures taps into the human resources of the school community and in this way helps to ensure that children are offered more engaging and authentic learning experiences.”

Swann, Peacock, Hart, Drummond, Creating Learning without limits (2012)



## Camberwell Park Specialist Support School

“It’s not about the disabilities, it is about the abilities”

Gufan’s dad, Sarfaraz Patel



Camberwell Park is a designated specialist support school based in the north of Manchester, catering for 100 pupils aged two to 11. Their needs are met through the school's specialist environment of small classes, high staffing ratios and staff experienced in working with children who have a variety of difficulties with learning.

The school provides for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, challenges with social, emotional and mental health, and complex social communication difficulties such as autism spectrum disorders.

The school works closely with 45 designated mainstream primary schools across north Manchester offering an outreach training and support service that has been well received and highly valued. This includes providing observations, advice and training to support building capacity and expertise in their respective mainstream schools. Every summer, some of the supported schools are invited to spend a day working alongside Camberwell's pupils. This has been a huge success and many schools now request an invitation.

A number of pupils from Camberwell Park regularly attend mainstream lessons linked to their Individual Education Plans. An example is a pupil with strengths in science who attends mainstream science lessons to extend his learning.

Camberwell Park has been an Open Futures flagship school since July 2013. It was judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted in two inspections held in May 2010 and June 2013. Established as a UNICEF Rights Respecting School, it has also held the ECO-Schools Green Flag Award since 2009. It gained the National Healthy Schools GOLD Award and Investors in People GOLD status and Financial Management in Schools awards. Camberwell encompasses Manchester's Equal Opportunities policy and the 'Every Child Matters' DfES guidance from 2004.

**"We want all our children to achieve and to develop skills to the best of their ability. Most importantly, we want to enable them to have respect for themselves, high self-esteem, be resilient and to be able to live and work co-operatively with others."**

*Mary Isherwood, Headteacher*



## Special ingredients of a special needs school

In line with all schools, Camberwell Park is organised into three stages of learning (Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2) across 12 classes. As far as possible, children are grouped with their peers according to age. There are some children within the school who benefit from a specialist teaching environment for some or all of the time, in order to meet their profound and multiple learning difficulties or their needs on the autistic spectrum. Camberwell Park's curriculum planning is embedded in the school's values, summarised by the acronym 'PROUD'.

When developing aspects of the curriculum, one of the main challenges is to provide suitable content as well as modes of delivery for the children. The school achieves this within each of the key stages because their staff are guided by the children's needs.

"The special ingredients of our school are the children, families and staff who want the very best for children who are faced with special needs and disabilities including learning, physical, medical, sensory and social - as well as the ambition and drive of the staff who want the children to be the best that they can be," explains Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher at Camberwell Park. "I think it is the commitment of the staff and the celebration of the pupils' achievements that other people take away from us."

Mary Isherwood, the Headteacher, notes that it is not just about the delicate care for special needs. "What I always say to parents, carers and visitors is that ours is a school like any other school in the context that the children have access to all areas of the curriculum and our focus is on their learning and achievement," she says.

"However, we have those added extras such as smaller class sizes, higher staffing ratios and staff that are skilled and experienced in working with children who have difficulties with their learning. Having said all of that, many of the teaching strategies that we use – including our work on Open Futures strands – are easily transferable to mainstream schools and when mainstream teachers come to visit they often take away things we do here to their own settings."

Camberwell Park School's values are summarised as PROUD:

- **P**assionate about ensuring that children have access to a broad, balanced and fun curriculum.
- **R**espectful of all the individual differences and needs of our children.
- **O**rganised to meet these requirements and provide appropriate learning opportunities and resources.
- **U**nderstanding – all of the teaching staff have a high level of subject knowledge across the curriculum and are...
- **D**edicated to adapting the curriculum to meet all the children's needs and ensure that all children develop to their full potential.

## Open Futures at Camberwell Park school

Camberwell Park was judged outstanding by Ofsted in 2010, with the inspectors commenting on its excellent curriculum. However, the school wanted to continue to enhance and develop the curriculum for all its learners. At the time of hearing about Open Futures, the school had extended the curriculum to include and embed wider aspects of learning. The Open Futures approach, involving *askit*, *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit*, fitted well with the school's development plans and aspirations.

In September 2011 Camberwell Park embarked on a two-year bespoke training programme with Open Futures. Camberwell Park was the first dedicated specialist support school that Open Futures had worked with. Mary Isherwood and her team were enthusiastic but determined to test the promises made by Open Futures. The school leadership team wanted to embed the Open Futures approach but were rightly cautious about how this should be done, and needed to ensure that it would work for their children and their staff. The Open Futures team needed to understand Camberwell's children and way of working in order for their objectives to be met.

The Open Futures journey at Camberwell Park started with a full commitment from senior leaders, the governors and staff, followed quickly by a whole staff involvement programme. The decision to involve all staff from the start meant planning and implementing a comprehensive programme of training and learning days.

Following discussions with the senior leadership team, individual strand audits and consultations between trainers and staff, a training programme was agreed between the school and the Open Futures team.

Camberwell chose to start with the three skills strands in the first year: *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit*. The leadership team decided to take some time with the lead *askit* trainer in order to discuss and understand how *askit* could work most effectively with their children, given their wide range of communication difficulties.

"Open Futures was introduced to us as a school at just the right time. We were reviewing and extending the existing curriculum model and it helped us to confirm that we were doing the right thing in engaging our pupils in real life learning and helping them to see the world in a new light, particularly by questioning and making choices...We felt that the programme would enable us to blend enquiry and skills in a creative way and allow pupils to develop their natural curiosity and enquire about the world around them."

Mary Isherwood, Headteacher

## Shared principles and values

Open Futures embraces the Department for Education and the National College of School Leadership hallmarks of an outstanding curriculum.

An outstanding curriculum:

1. is underpinned by aims, values and purpose
2. develops the whole person - knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes
3. is broad, balanced and has clear progression in subject knowledge and skills
4. is filled with rich first-hand purposeful experiences
5. is flexible and responsive to individual needs and interests
6. embeds the principle of sustainability
7. has an eye on the future and the needs of future citizens
8. encourages the use of environments and expertise beyond the classroom
9. makes meaningful links between areas of knowledge across the curriculum and the major issues of our time
10. has a local, national and international dimension



### Connected

It's all about relationships, built over time between schools and Open Futures. It is not an 'off-the-shelf' product.

### Holistic

Open Futures is a 'whole school' approach. It is a key driver for school improvement, learning and teaching, pupil, parental and community engagement.

### Progression

Schools do not have to set up everything at once. Introducing Open Futures is planned with each school.

### Six guiding Open Futures principles used at Camberwell Park

### Personalised

Open Futures takes a personalised approach. It is flexible and can be integrated into schools in different ways, tailored to each school.

### Embedded

Open Futures sits at the heart of the curriculum, enabling teachers to plan rich learning experiences in core subjects. It is not a 'bolt-on' service.

### Collaborative

Skills and knowledge are shared between the School and Open Futures trainers and build on what already exists.

## Training and development programme

Developing a staff training programme is key to integrating Open Futures successfully into the school and helping to ensure its long-term sustainability.

This includes training days, teaching resources, materials and a curriculum consultant who supports the school throughout the process. As each school has different levels of experience and resources, training is tailored to meet circumstances and need.

At Camberwell, highly skilled trainers, accredited by Open Futures's partners, brought hands-on structured professional training in each of the strands, which enabled teachers and teaching assistants to develop their personal skills, expertise and confidence as well as to develop particular strand knowledge in both practice and curriculum terms. In turn, the teachers brought deep knowledge of the school's children and their learning needs. Staff and trainers explored what was best for their children, together building a curriculum and lesson plans that were right for Camberwell.

**“Our decision to start with growing, cooking and filming in year 1 was based on the very practical nature of these strands for our learners with SEN and the fact we already had some elements of growing, cooking and filming in school on which to build.”**

Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher

### Teachers' feedback on trainers:

#### askit

“It was a unique opportunity to be able to work with Roger, an expert in the field, in creating a unique and bespoke training course for our staff and children whilst retaining the principles and philosophy of *askit* (P4C).”

#### cookit

“Excellent working relationship with Sandra; working in partnership felt we're growing together while staff and children were learning new skills. Thank you Sandra.”

#### growit

“An inspiring professional who knew how to capture our imagination and drive our enthusiasm for growing and learning about horticulture forward. Thank you for all those handy tips Anne.”

#### filmit

“When Denise introduced us to ‘Photo story’ it opened up the world for some of our children, being able to re-tell familiar stories as well as writing their own stories independently. During the ‘Photo story’ training one of our children was several steps ahead of the teachers and Denise in writing his story and editing it. This confirmed why it was right for us to include our children in the training.”

All teachers and some of the teaching assistants were linked directly to one of the strands. Involving all staff with the development and implementation of Open Futures as well as tailoring the training sessions to the school's needs was fundamental to staff owning and sustaining the activities and ensuring Open Futures strands were considered together. Open Futures became a defining part of school life and embedding it in the curriculum was an effort all staff took part in. Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher, explains: “It was right for us to include the children in the training, this helped us to develop and strengthen relationships with our trainers as well as helping them to grow in developing their knowledge and understanding of our children. We all grew together.”

**“The skills strands were very practical and fitted easily into the school's existing curriculum model and approach to learning.”**

Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher

### Strand champions

For each of *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit*, a ‘strand champion’ volunteered from among the staff to lead the strand so that staff could work collaboratively. Strand champions are enthusiastic lead teachers who take responsibility for developing an individual strand of the Open Futures programme. With relevant external help, they support planning, and encourage others as they go through the training and prepare to roll out the strand across the school.

Alongside the training, staff considered how the Open Futures strands could weave through their curriculum to support and extend children's learning. The Open Futures training team provided excellent professional advice across all strands.

The training also included a small group of children, who then acted as class champions to train others in their class.

## Phased implementation of Open Futures at Camberwell Park school

### Year one

The first year was carefully planned. It was all about getting to know Open Futures and training and development of the *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit* strands. While nervous about the changes, the school was very committed.

### Year three

By the third year of Open Futures, the programme was being embedded into the full curriculum. Advanced training and development days supported continued skills progression among staff and pupils. Open Futures is committed to supporting schools beyond the initial training phase; in the past year Camberwell Park hosted and participated in Open Futures/RHS training through the *growit* and *cookit* strands, linking to Maths and Science through Open Futures CPD for progression.

### Year two

In the second year, the training and the implementation of the *askit* strand began for all staff and children, while the three existing strands continued to develop. It was decided not to do *askit* training until year two because the staff wanted to do it together as a whole and they already had the other strand training days in place.



## Independent evaluation

“Immediate staff responses to the programme are that the training is excellent. It is experienced as much more impressive in the context of comparisons to other Inset training days and CPD. This has emerged very clearly from questionnaire responses year on year from 2006; a consistent finding supported by meetings and interviews.

“Staff professional development through Open Futures enables teachers to make the strands and activities their own. Open Futures tends to embed collaborative practices between staff members, enhancing curriculum coherence and pastoral care across the school. Once Open Futures is established, there is on-going, mutually dependent development of curriculum, organisation and space.

“Ofsted assessments, school level attainment, and exclusion figures also suggest school quality holding steady through the introduction of Open Futures, which is reassuring for any school looking to initiate Open Futures.”

*Newcastle University, Evaluation 2013*

## Overcoming barriers: cost, time, space, staff

Once the commitment was established of governors and senior leaders, as well as subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants, the importance of creating a good sustainable financial plan became apparent to everyone. There was acceptance of the short-term challenges as well as recognition of the benefits in the long run. Because the Open Futures philosophy and strands fitted so well with the school's curriculum and ethos, as well as complementing the other aspects the school had in place (Eco schools, Healthy schools, learning by doing) it wasn't a case of an additional line in their budgets, rather a significant overall adaptation of their budgets.

Allison tells us about the first year hurdles. "Time was a huge commitment in year one and brought about additional costs and organisational challenges in carrying out training during the day", she said. "Involving most of the staff brought upon some logistical issues such as being able to provide cover for classes and dealing with additional costs of paying for them.

"We utilised the space we had as best we could. We started with an art room that had one sink and a cooker, but we were inspired by Open Futures to change this and were fortunate in securing funding to make physical changes to the building and create a new cookery room with different height work surfaces and sinks with equipment suitable for our children to develop cooking skills and create a proper classroom in the kitchen to deliver the curriculum subjects.

"At the same time, we were able to build raised growing beds at different heights for children of different ages and wheelchair accessible."

**"Overcoming barriers is mostly down to the commitment to the programme and the attitude of senior leaders in driving Open Futures forward; looking beyond the programme and making it work for us."**

Allison Taylor  
Deputy Headteacher

## A trainer's story: cookit

"When I heard we were going to work with a Special school who had children with quite severe physical and learning disabilities I must admit I was a bit out of my comfort zone, not knowing exactly what to expect as it was new to us as well.

"At the first visit to Camberwell Park I met with Mary and Allison. They took us around the school and we looked at what facilities they had and chatted with them about how they see cooking becoming embedded in their school.

"During the training we had a very good working relationship! Very collaborative and open. I brought the primary schools cooking expertise, I showed them how we would 'normally' do it and they would run with me and we made it work in their school because they understood what we could or couldn't do with their children.

"We started in the same way as we would with any school, with whole staff training about how they would be cooking with primary children, the value of cooking in primary school and learning specific techniques to cook or use the knife so the children are safe. Then we moved to cooking sessions with children and as we were going through the training the staff could immediately feed back what they saw could work with their children.

"We came up with ideas to make it easier for their children. We simplified the recipes wherever we could and adapted the lessons. We also adapted some cooking equipment to suit their children's ability - for example the liquidiser had a big red button to push on.

"One time we made couscous and vegetables with the children. At the end of the session we offered it to the children to try. The staff were surprised at how it was accepted by the autistic children who can be quite funny about textures in their mouth. So just like in mainstream school, children say they don't like something but once they made it on their own they are willing to try it.

"As in any mainstream school the children in Camberwell Park were inquisitive and asked questions and were very engaged in what they were doing. We were all pleasantly surprised to discover what the children achieved.

"It isn't much different from a mainstream school but just needs a bit of adapting, here and there. We can definitely achieve the same outcomes as in mainstream schools."

Sandra Rayner

## A trainer's story: askit

“When some people are told that *askit* is about engaging children in communities of philosophical enquiry, they express surprise – even occasionally expressing the view that ‘children can’t do philosophy’. But all the evidence indicates that children in mainstream schools, of any age, can ask philosophical questions, and gain enormously from doing so, and from engaging in thinking about them reasonably and constructively.

“It would be less surprising, perhaps, to find parents and even teachers of children with special needs, particularly learning difficulties, expressing a similar view, that asking their children to engage in *askit* would be a curriculum initiative too far.

“Nevertheless, a few years ago the idea was mooted to ‘give it a go’ at Camberwell Park School, in Manchester. From the start, it should be said, the openness and willingness of all the staff, but particularly the head and deputy, Mary Isherwood and Allison Randall, was key to what turned out to be a successful venture.

“Naturally, the ambition of the project needed to be tailored to the differing needs of the pupils, and it was agreed that a key focus should be on helping pupils to listen better and to express choices in as clear a way as they could. If they could develop that expression into opinions, and better still into justifications of their opinions, so much the better – and indeed at least one class of older pupils was able to do just that.

“But it was obvious that a standard ‘Level 1’ introduction for staff would not quite fit the bill, and so two SAPERE trainers, myself and Richard Gore, devised a programme that enabled all staff, including TAs and support workers, to experience, on the one hand, the basic process of communities of enquiry (stimulus, responses, questions, discussions) some elements of which might be suitable for their children; and, on the other hand, to engage with a range of activities (what Richard called ‘philosophical play’) that would provide opportunities for children to develop some of the thinking skills that are basic to making good judgements, whether practical or moral.

“These activities included noticing similarities and differences between things (and then between ideas), sorting things into categories (to evaluate a good/bad idea), expressing preferences (would you rather?), taking a position (agree/disagree), etc. Ideas were also provided for scaffolding children’s questions towards higher order, more general questions.

“It is hard to prove, of course, that such ideas and exercises made a clear difference to the education of the children involved, but what can be claimed with confidence is that both children and staff at Camberwell welcomed the introduction of *askit*, and it certainly gave everyone more to think about! Indeed, it almost certainly helped all concerned appreciate that cognitive challenges are no less appropriate at special needs schools than physical ones – and that philosophical enquiry, suitably presented and adapted, provides just such challenges, in the very human context of communities where every child really does matter and has a voice, even if at times it is a challenge for others to hear it.”

[Roger Sutcliffe](#)

## A trainer's story: supporting senior leadership

“At Camberwell Park school, their philosophy, their approach, and all the work the school had done to date enabled them to look at Open Futures and say, wow, that’s it, that is exactly the sort of thing we want to do and the context we need to bring.

“One of the first questions I always ask senior leadership is, okay, what do you particularly want Open Futures to do in your school? Because then we are able to judge the programme’s impact and success against clearly defined learning outcomes. The school needs to be really clear about why they want to be an Open Futures school, what they want the children to get from it, and how they want the curriculum to be shaped by it. Once you have sorted these through, when an Ofsted review comes in you are already very clear about why and how you are doing this.

“It’s best to prepare the ground first, talking to each other in the school, visiting other schools who have done it, and having a look at the quality mark. All this will help the school leadership manage the process for their organisation.

“The process through which we work with schools is more or less the same, but the training itself doesn’t look the same at each school, it depends on the school’s specific needs. The process is quite organic - there is no one template to fit them all, no strict right or wrong. It is an invitation for exploration. Each school and individual teacher can explore the way he or she wants to use the strands in their class.

“Everything we do is about children’s learning and teachers’ plans against quite specific learning objectives and outcomes. If you know what your objectives are you can measure impact, you can clearly see how the school has been successful, and teachers are absolutely clear about what they are doing, why they are doing it and how.

“Open Futures enables teachers to teach aspects of a topic beyond the key elements the curriculum requires; by using feelings, emotions, empathy and expressions through the *askit* strand. Open Futures acts as a vehicle that extends and enhances the topic to deeper personal levels. Because at the end of the day, no matter what we do, we need to teach children to think and encourage them to be autonomous.

“Over the course of the past ten years I have had the privilege to walk into so many schools and hear so many wonderful stories and examples from talking to lots of children and teachers. I still get really excited when teachers say to me ‘the children understood the topic in a way they have never done before’ and it’s because the Open Futures approach has taught them how to think.

“Once the school gets it, it’s never the same again, it’s just the way the school ‘is!’”

[Sue Macleod](#)

## Sustaining Open Futures

Today, Camberwell Park is an Open Futures Flagship School. The Open Futures approach is fully implemented, with all four strands embedded in the school's curriculum, development plans, vision and ethos. Camberwell Park employs several strategies for ensuring that the Open Futures approach consistently influences how learning is planned, organised and delivered across the school.

- Open Futures is linked with the school's vision, aims, objectives and development plan
- The Open Futures Quality Mark is used to create a monitoring model to clearly evidence that the standards are achieved in a progressive way
- The school development team and strand champions are in place to support planning and progression
- There is an ongoing training programme for all, building on existing staff skills and as part of the induction of new staff
- The governing body has a central role in monitoring and assessing the impact of Open Futures within the school
- The Open Futures approach is used to leverage learning by linking with other projects and initiatives the school is part of, such as Eco schools, Healthy schools, Global dimensions and Community cohesion, and UNESCO rights respecting school
- The development of the school's facilities and grounds has accommodated the four strand activities with appropriate spaces and equipment
- The school has actively contributed to Open Futures programme development by delivering workshops with the trainers, hosting Open Futures events and showcasing the school's work to others
- The school's financial plan has ensured the sustainability of Open Futures within the school
- A strategy is in place to ensure continuation should there be changes in the senior leadership team

## Monitoring and assessing impact

Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher, explains how the school has assessed the impact of Open Futures. "The process of monitoring the impact of Open Futures was very much a measure of the standards of the quality mark", she says. "This was developed by colour coding and highlighting each standard as and when they were met with supporting evidence. This method of monitoring was shared with other Open Futures schools.

"Assessing the impact of Open Futures and pupil progress has been more qualitative than quantitative. In line with the school's assessment cycle, teachers have a responsibility to assess progress in subject areas. This has included using evidence that includes all of the Open Futures strands. There are examples of this across the school."

## Conclusion

For any school, maintaining an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating can be a challenge. For Camberwell Park success has come not just from maintaining but also from building on, observing and monitoring high standards at all times. To be outstanding it is essential that there is a whole-school commitment to achieving a shared vision. Children are at the heart of Camberwell Park School and consideration of their holistic needs and assessing and monitoring the impact of school policies on them is an essential part of school practice. Over the years, it is this that has driven school improvement priorities, with a clear, shared vision about embracing only those initiatives that support the school ethos to enable the children to achieve their utmost.






# One Year of Open Futures at Camberwell Park



22  
Different crops grown




100GB  
Photos taken



375 Words  
New vocabulary learned



1200  
Questions asked (through askit strand)



50kg  
Potatoes grown



1600l  
Compost used



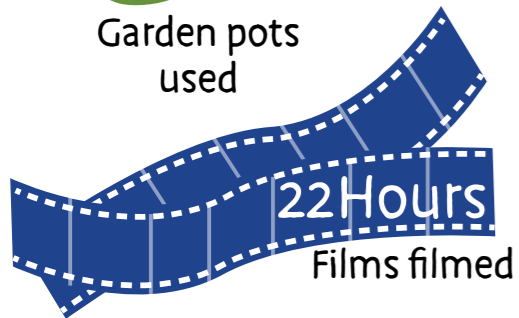
415  
Garden pots used



4290  
Hand washes (or 8580 hands washed!)



15kg  
Flour used



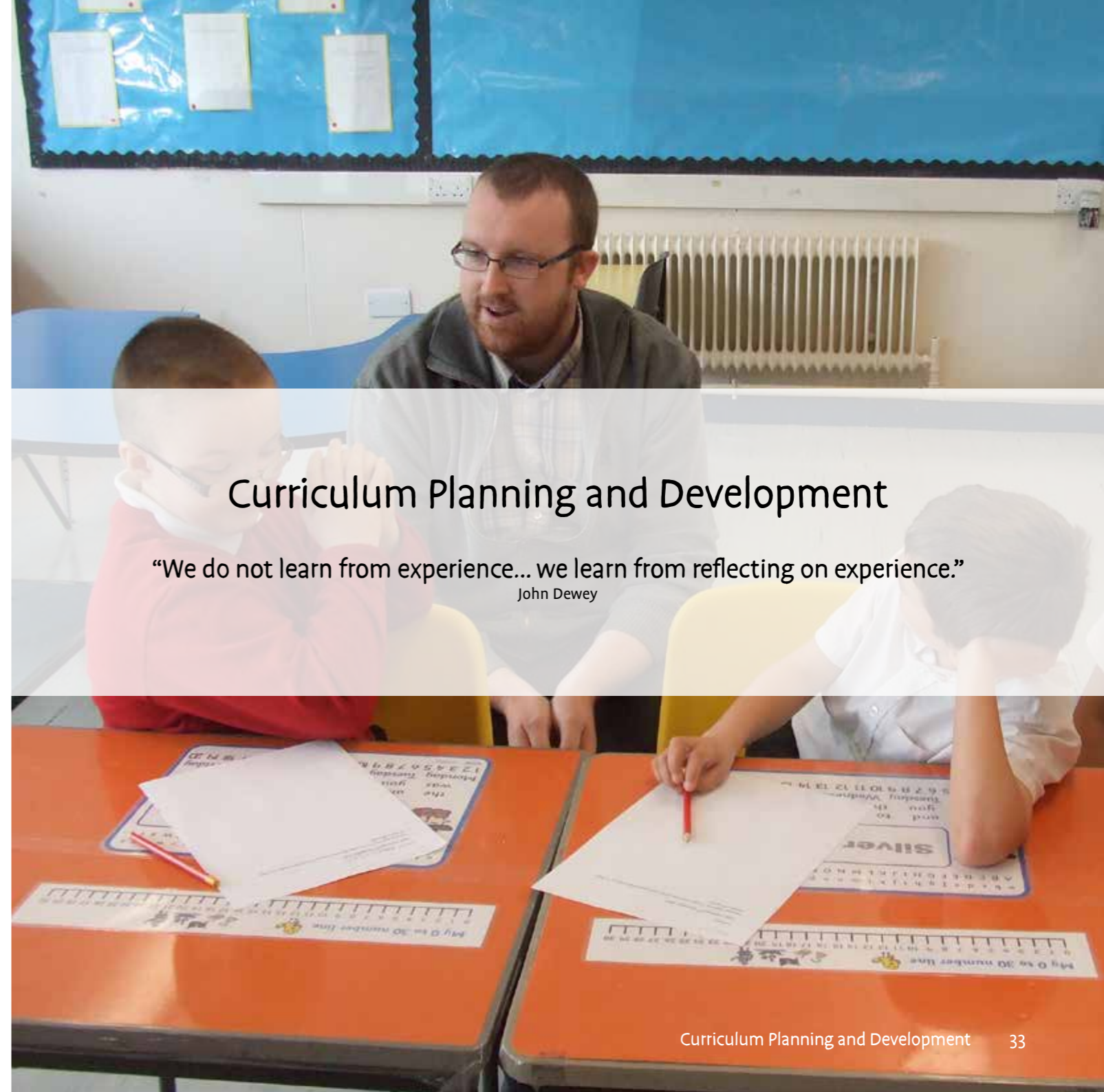
22 Hours  
Films filmed



2500  
Seeds planted



30  
National cuisines sampled



## Curriculum Planning and Development

“We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.”  
John Dewey

Many schools recognise creativity as an important driver to achieve a broad and balanced curriculum that delivers successful learning experiences and outcomes.

Camberwell Park School has a creative and imaginative curriculum, which follows all the subjects and objectives of the National Curriculum, but is adapted to provide a specialist learning experience for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

**“The curriculum is outstanding ... Pupils make rapid and sustained progress because of the highly personalised curriculum and practical nature of their learning... The careful planning of the curriculum tailors learning to match the pupils’ needs and match their curiosity.”**

*Ofsted, June 2013*

### Long-term curriculum

The long-term curriculum plan is a topic-based, ‘spiral’ curriculum. Topics are taught for a term or half term, with a national curriculum foundation subject (geography, science, art, music, history or religious education) threading through them. The topics operate on a two-year loop, ensuring that each pupil receives a broad and balanced curriculum and enabling children working at the earliest levels of development to experience key concepts presented in a range of ways.

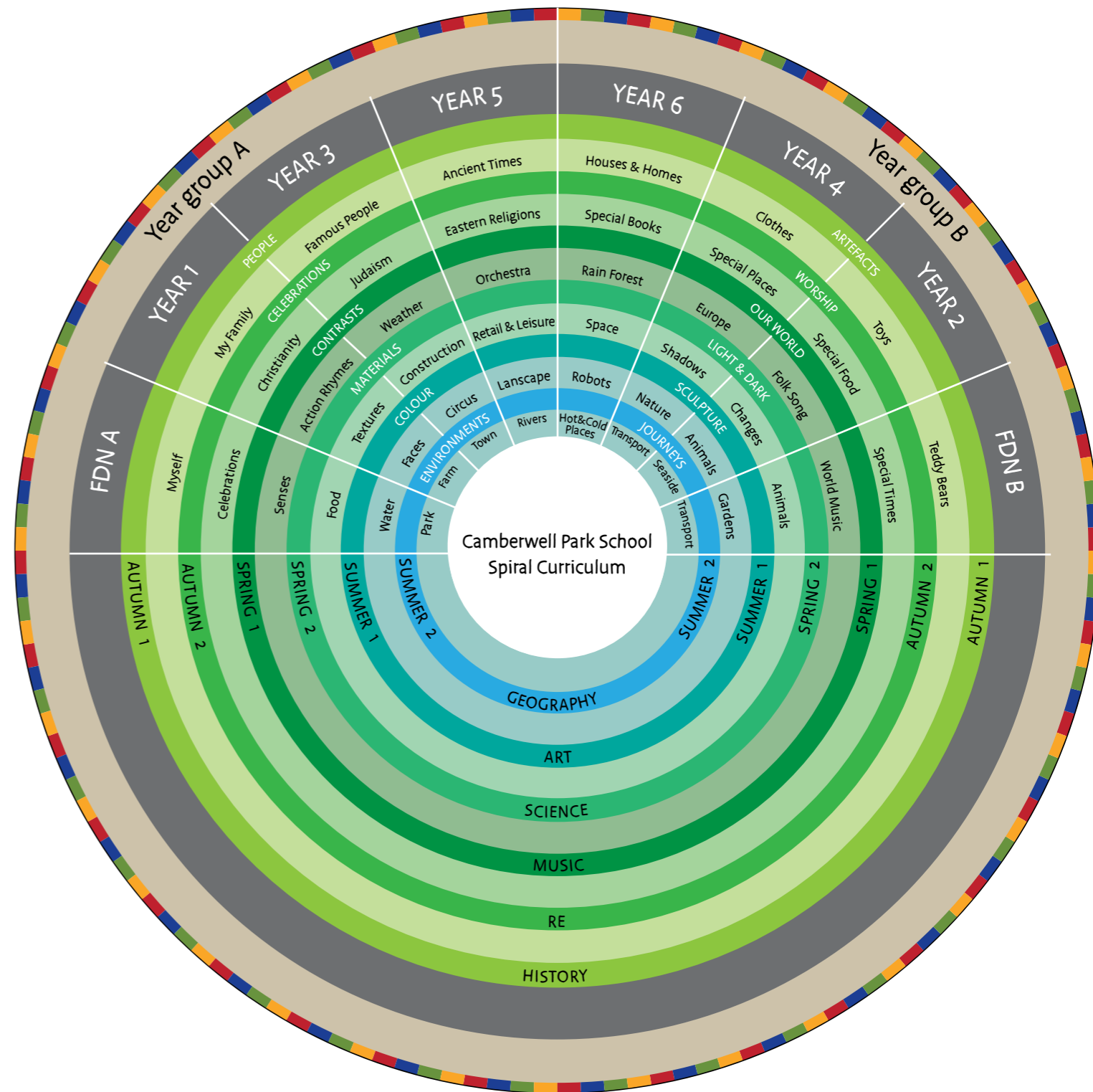
For example, we can see from the diagram that year group A in Autumn 1 term have the umbrella subject focus of ‘People’. This recurs every two years within a different specific theme: ‘Myself’ (FDN), ‘My Family’ (Year 1), ‘Famous People’ (Year 3), ‘Ancient Times’ (Year 5).

The umbrella subject is related to a foundation subject, in this case history. This subject determines the focus of the work for all the other national curriculum subjects. If this subject was art, for example, teaching and learning in the other subjects, including educational visits, would have an art focus. This approach ensures that the children are able to make links between the different subjects and thus develops a clear context for learning. The key skills of Maths and English are taught across all subjects and speaking and listening is a focus throughout the school day and beyond.

### Medium and short-term planning

Medium term plans are completed by subject leaders in association with the assistant head teacher for curriculum. They are based on the National Curriculum, with programmes of study adapted to suit Camberwell Park’s learners. They also encompass the full range of thematic strands which underpin the school’s ethos and way of working, including Open Futures strands, Rights Respecting School, ECO and community cohesion.

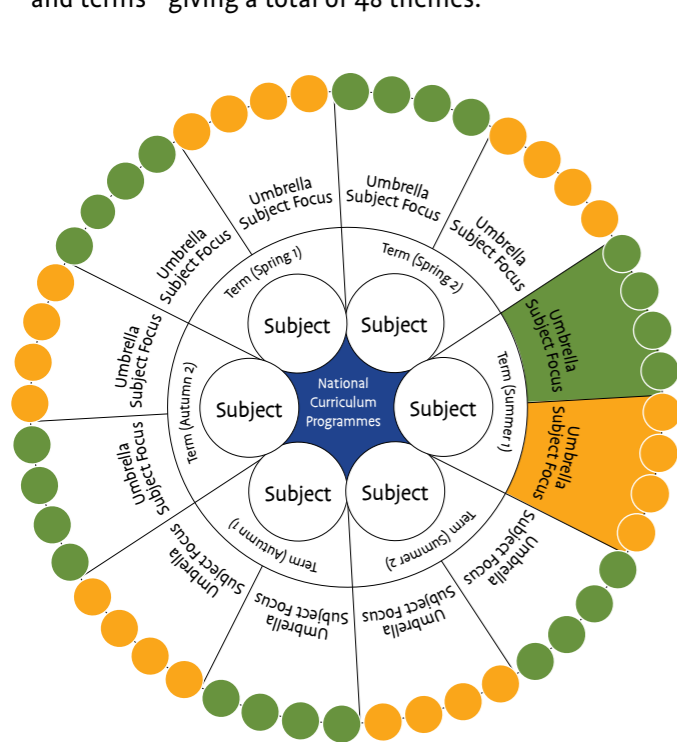
School teachers are given autonomy over how to format their lesson plans. This provides opportunities for staff to think creatively and to tailor lessons according to children’s individual abilities and needs.



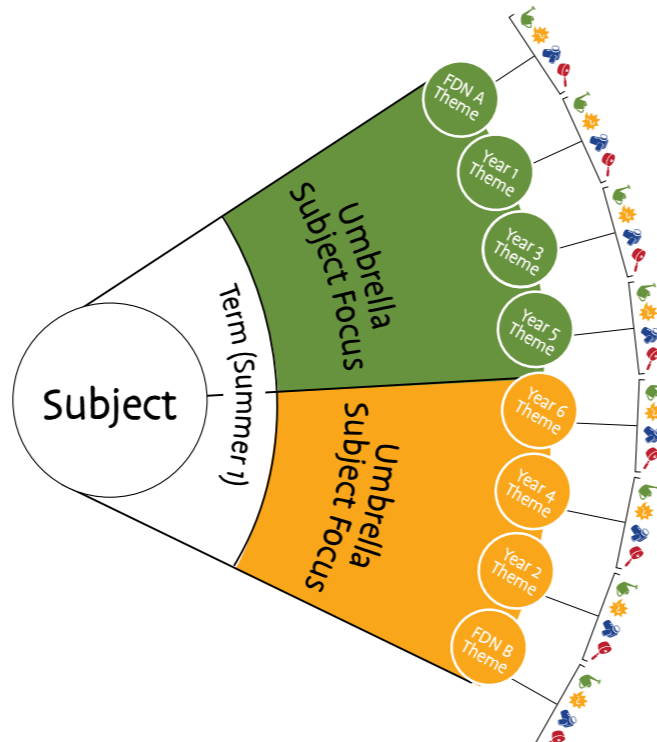
## Endless possibilities

The spiral approach injects diversity into the curriculum by generating a wide range of different themes:

- Each of the six subjects (History/RE/Music/Science/Art/Geography) is taught through two umbrella topics.
- Each of the 12 umbrella topics is taught every two years under a different theme (four times in total).
- Therefore, each foundation subject is taught through eight different themes across the different year groups and terms - giving a total of 48 themes.



Open Futures supports and enhances the diversity and creativity of the Camberwell Park curriculum. Under each of the themes within the curriculum are four potential Open Futures approaches to delivering a lesson - **providing at least 192 different potential lesson options within the school's curriculum.**



## Embedding Open Futures: an even more creative curriculum

The Open Futures programme and its four strands provide Camberwell Park with a creative conduit for children to learn and meet the requirements of the spiral curriculum and the National Curriculum programme of studies in a fun, interesting and accessible way.

The strands contribute to and enhance the creative curriculum at Camberwell Park, as they act as a platform for staff to build creative and rich lessons which are engaging and meaningful to children when learning core curriculum subjects.

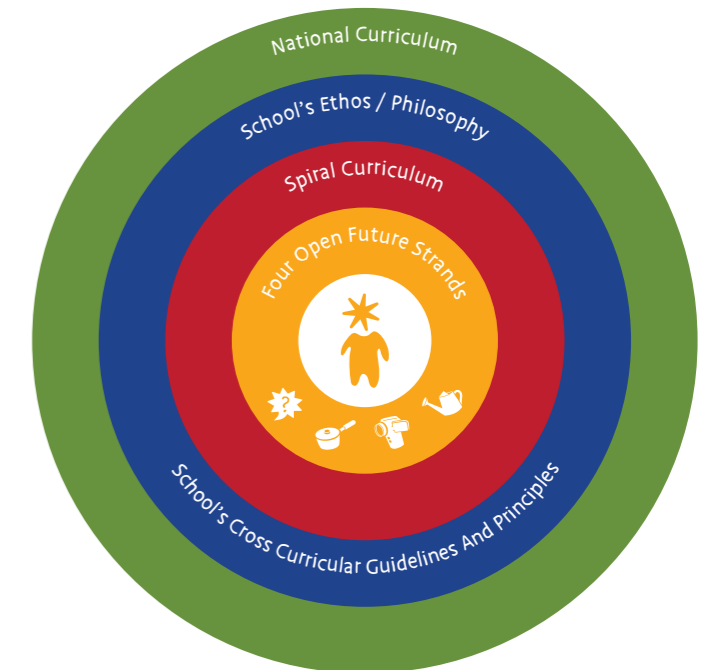
“It was easy to embed Open Futures into our existing curriculum plans,” says Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher. “Our curriculum model is topic-based and encompasses all areas of the curriculum. It was easy to include aspects of the four strands into medium term plans to ensure teachers continued to teach English, Maths, Science, Design Technology etc whilst integrating and building on the skills and knowledge of Open Futures. There were and are still times when teachers plan specific lessons that teach cooking and horticultural skills, for example knife skills, planting seeds that the children need to develop in order to be able to use them in all settings and consolidate their new skills gained.”

Beyond delivering national curriculum subjects, the strands enable the children to explore the worlds of gardening, cooking, film, philosophy and communication. They develop a wide range of practical skills which are essential in their lives and improve their quality of life. The collaborative approach, through project-based learning, gives children opportunities to experience real world education.

This drives the discovery of broader skills such as intercultural competences, problem solving, initiative and entrepreneurship, teamwork and creativity.

**“We are proud to be an Open Futures School - incorporating the strands into our curriculum has really supported the children’s learning outcomes - and it is great fun!”**

Mary Isherwood,  
Headteacher



## Cross-curricular links

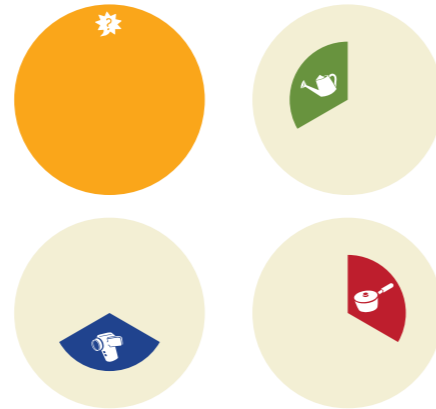
The spiral structure allows many cross-curricular links with Open Futures strands and encourages creative teaching. Teachers develop their skills and confidence in each of the strands with the Open Futures trainers, which enables them to take ownership of their planning.

Creative curriculum at its best is built with cross-curricular links, which make the curriculum a whole learning experience. Open Futures encourages schools to work in more cross-curricular ways and the four strands provide schools with a wide range of cross-curricular opportunities.

Cross-curricular links through Open Futures work in three ways:

- Between the strands themselves
- Between the strands and one curriculum subject
- As a platform to link two different curriculum subjects

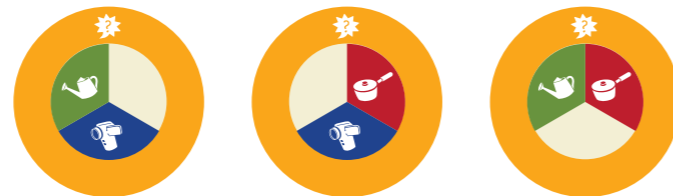
This gives a total of 11 ways to deliver lessons with Open Futures strand combinations, promoting cross-curricular links not only between different national curriculum subjects but also between the strands themselves. This provides a wide range of possibilities for teachers creating a lesson or sequence of lessons under the same theme or subject.



Using only one strand in one lesson.



Using one main strand and incorporating the askit strand to prompt enquiry-based learning.

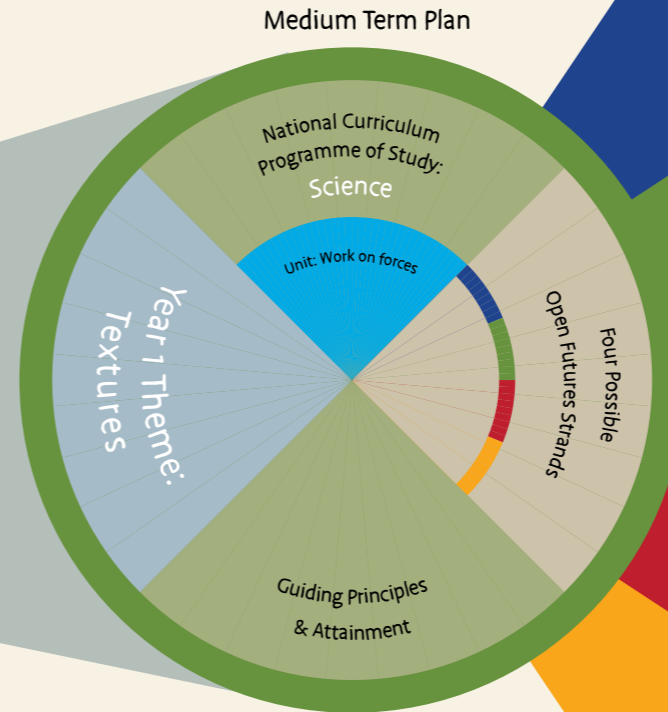
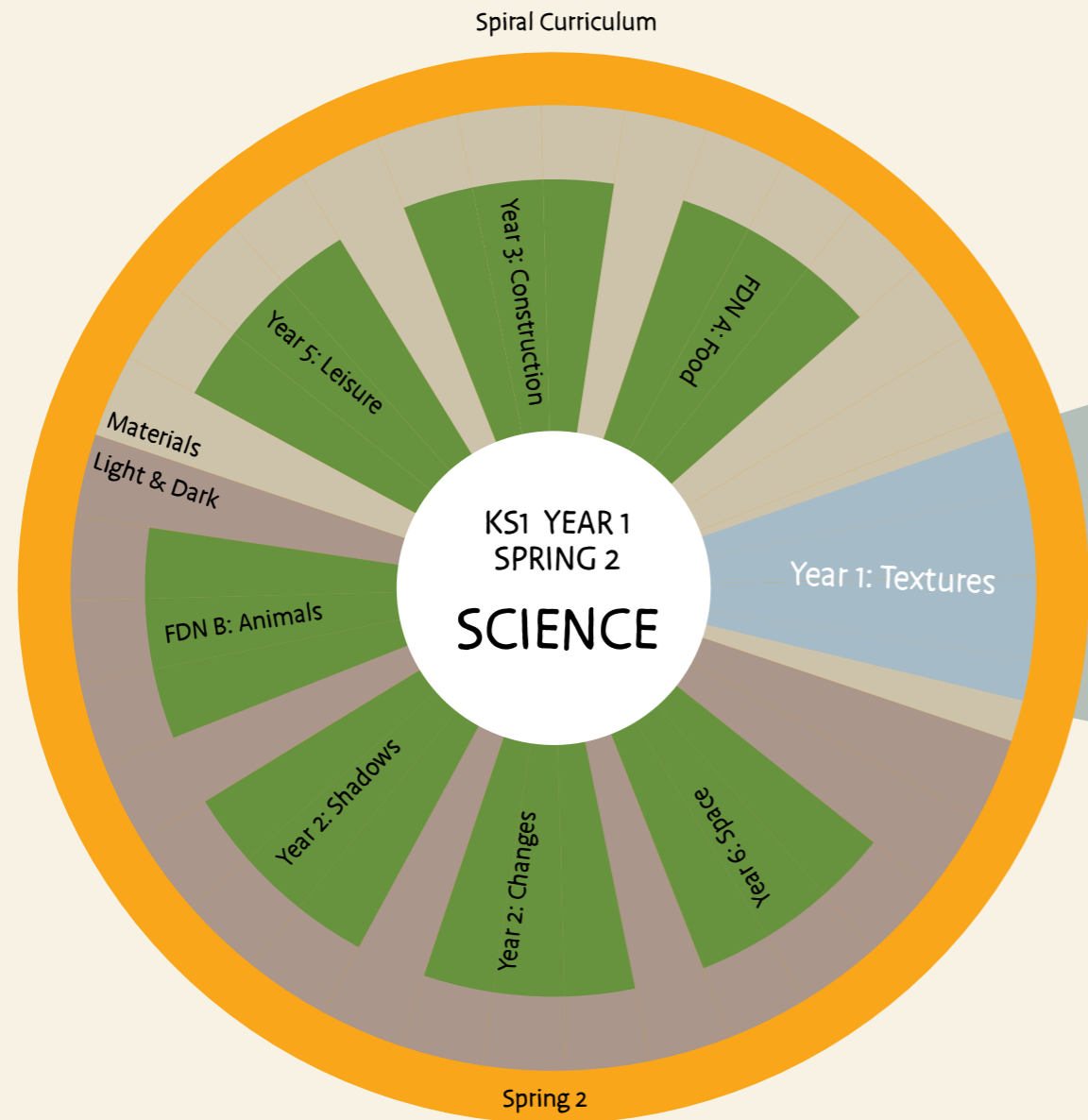


Using a combination of two main strands during one lesson and incorporating the askit strand to prompt enquiry-based learning.



Using a combination of four strands used in sequencing lessons under the same theme or subject.





Short Term Plans



Lesson:

Children to take photos of different materials, identify texture of each one and prepare a photo album with names.



Lesson:

In the garden children to describe and group rocks and soils on the basis of their characteristics, including appearance, texture and permeability.



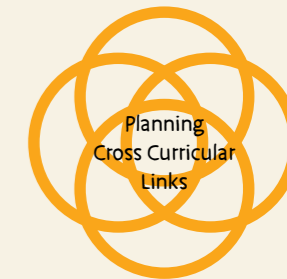
Lesson:

Children to make pizza. Feel the different textures of the ingredients and describe how they feel.

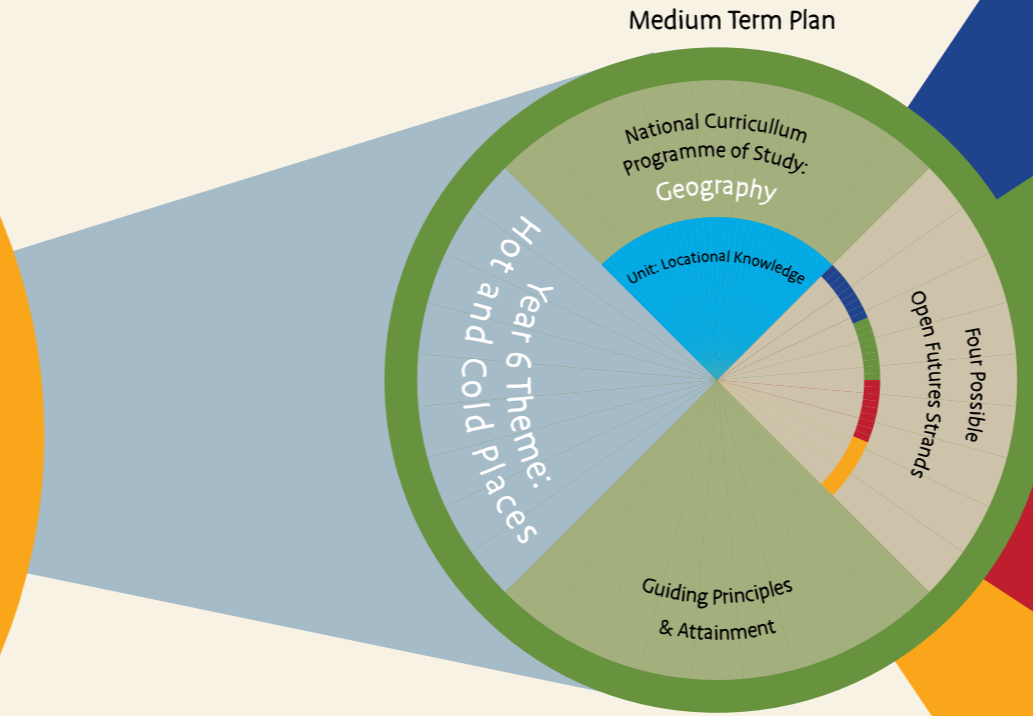
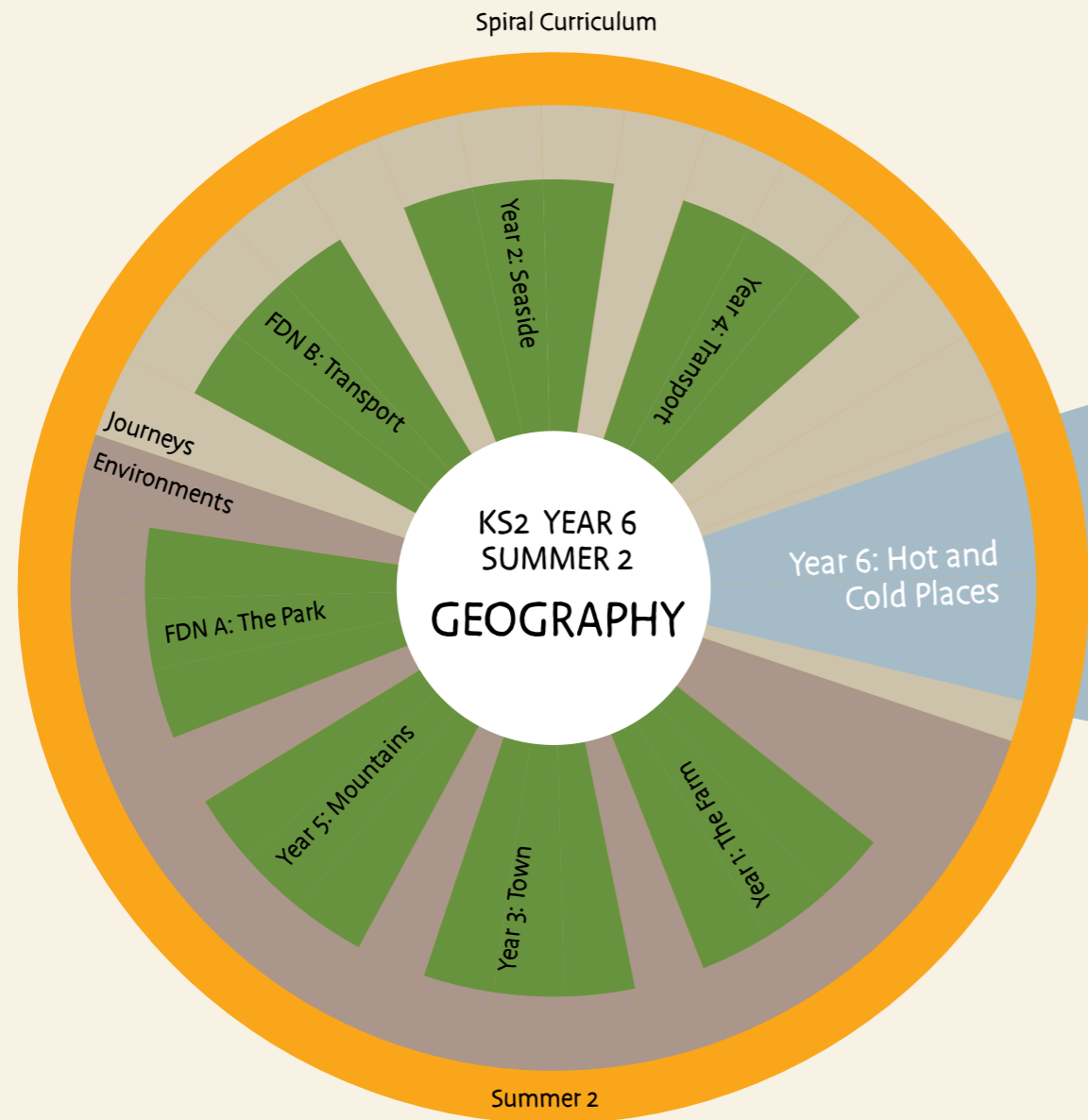


Lesson:

Describe the feeling of the different materials. Could different materials have the same texture? Could a physical process change a texture?



- e.g.
- Geography - Foods in Europe
  - English - Fine motor skills and hand strength
  - Maths - Counting, weighing and measures
  - PSHE - Kitchen safety and hand washing



Short Term Plans



Lesson:

Make a film which explores our rainforest garden, with the children narrating the rainforest heat, leaves, plants, foods and animals' names.



Lesson:

Experiment with planting two identical seeds and keeping them in different climates of the school. Depending on outcomes, decide where in the world the plants would grow best.



Lesson:

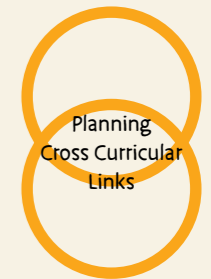
Cook a typical meal for Inuit people who live in extreme cold, such as fresh fish.

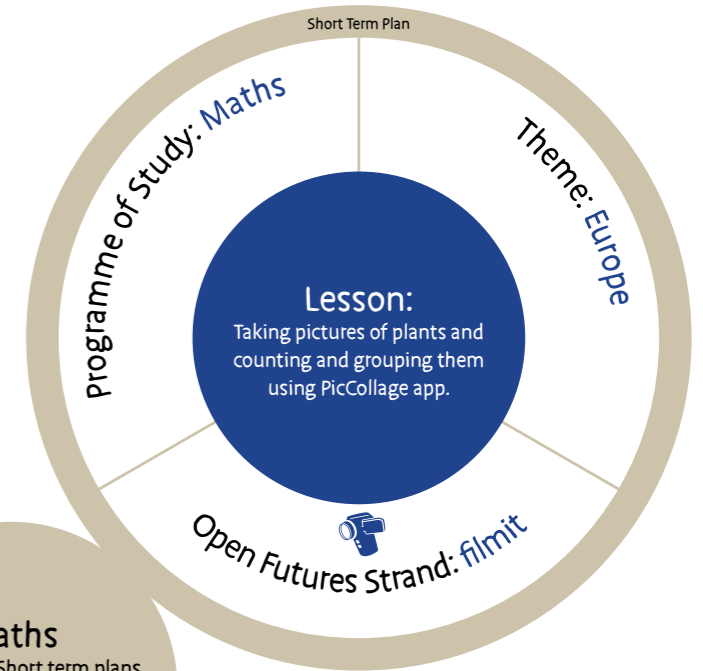
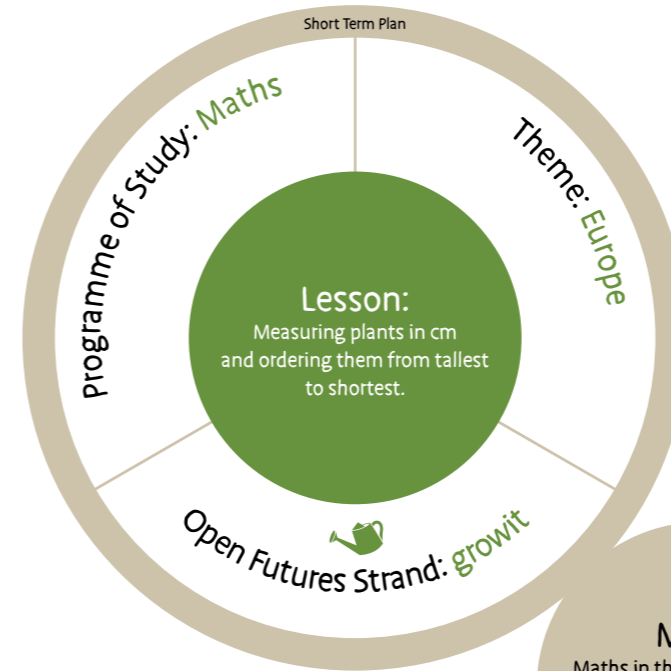
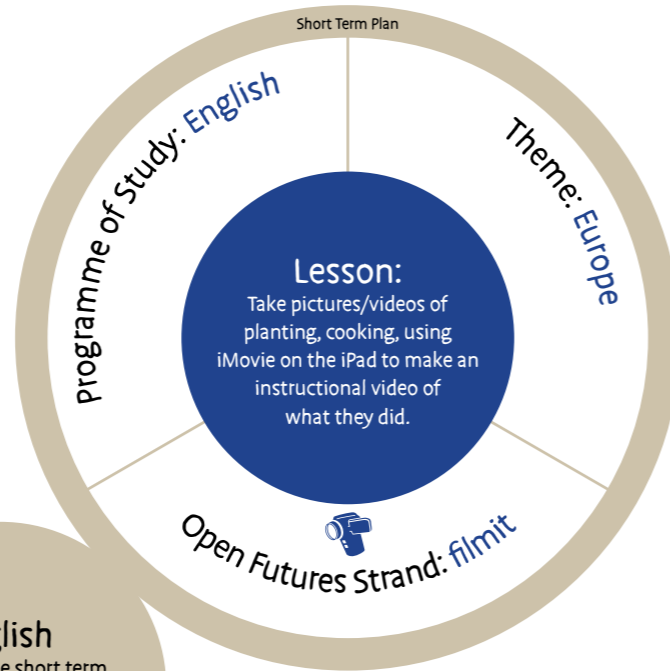
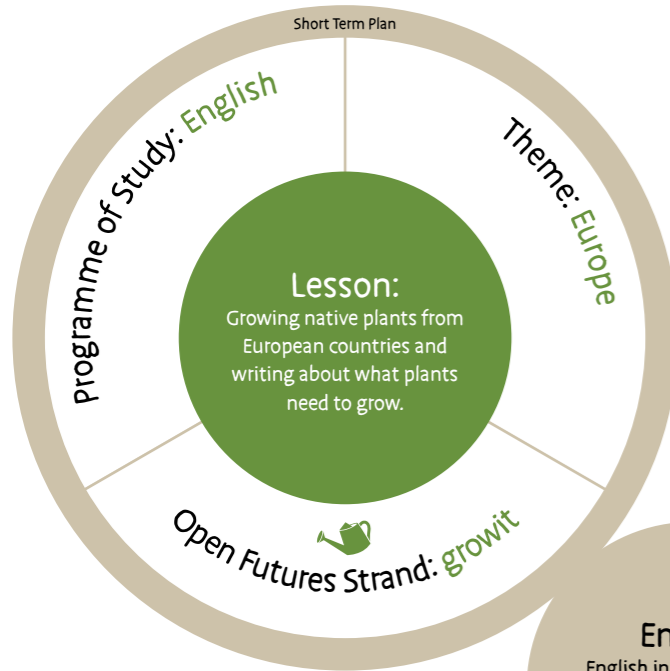


Lesson:

What does hot/cold feel like? Where is it hot/cold in the world? How would my life be different in these places?

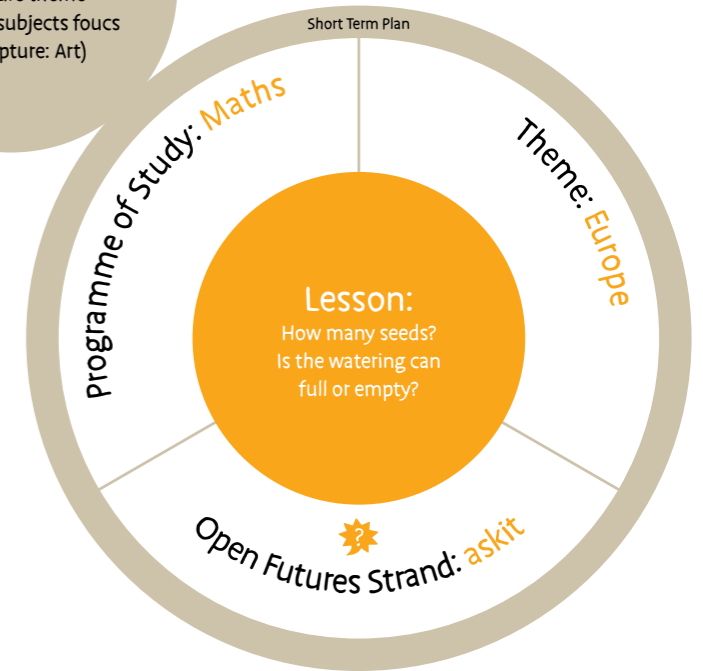
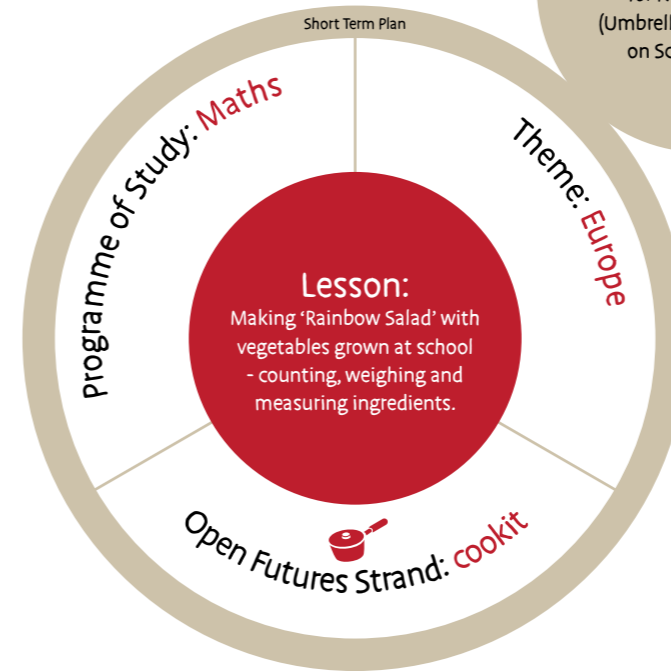
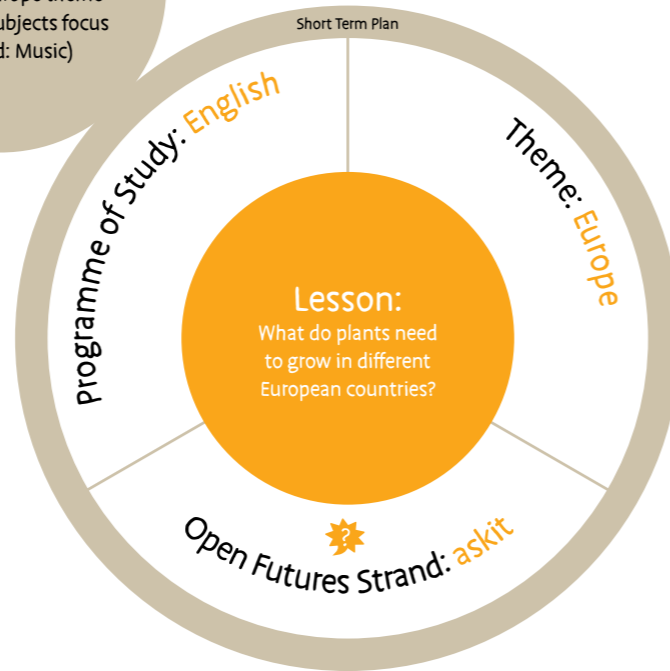
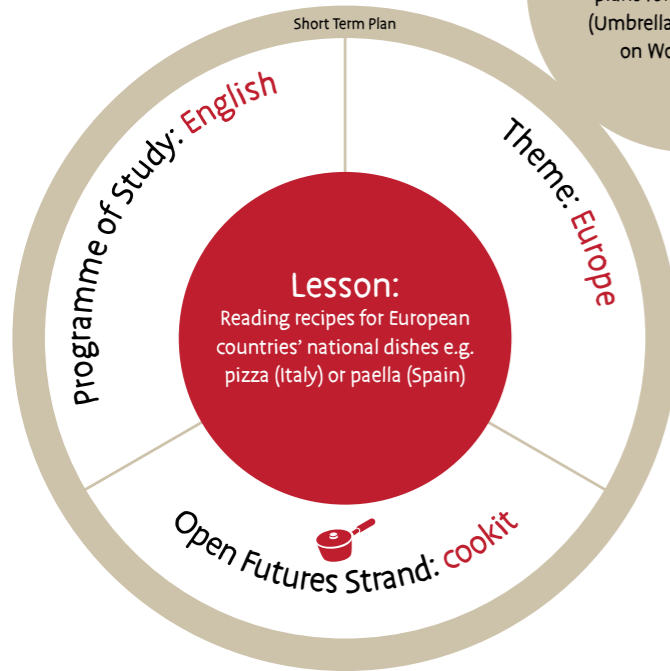
e.g.  
Science - Life processes and living things, record temperature, temperature is a measure of how hot or cold things are  
English - planning, predicting, exploring





**English**  
English in the short term plans for Europe theme (Umbrella subjects focus on World: Music)

**Maths**  
Maths in the Short term plans for Nature theme (Umbrella subjects focus on Sculpture: Art)



## A flexible model

The school always gives careful consideration to how the curriculum is taught as their cohort of pupils and range of disabilities changes year on year; this means they have to ‘think on their feet’, ensuring all the children have equal access each year.

With Open Futures, sometimes a strand is taught as a discreet lesson or sometimes through a topic. *askit* is taught as a discrete lesson for some children and is differentiated for others within lessons.

The objective is always to meet the needs of the children and help them to make progress. Children’s attainment can vary across key stages so teachers are expected to teach Open Futures key skills at an appropriate level for each child. Because they have a free hand in developing lesson plans, teachers remain alert to these challenges and deeply involved with Open Futures strands throughout the years.

“The evaluation of Open Futures recognises that schools are highly individual, with different needs and different goals. That is why Open Futures is seen as a flexible curriculum development model that allows for individual interpretation and ownership by each school, meaning that any changes made are likely to last longer and generate a wider range of outcome gains.”

Open Futures Evaluation: Summary of Findings

“We had the opportunity to create a unique and bespoke programme that would meet the needs of our children in an appropriate way whilst ensuring we were able to develop the skills of staff without losing their interest.”

Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher

“We are used to differentiating schemes/ policies to our own setting and making it work for our children. In many ways this was no different; it’s important for all schools to consider their own unique situation and population of pupils and think what is right for them.”

Mary Isherwood, Headteacher



## Impact

“It is important for our children to be able to learn in very practical ways.”

Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher



Open Futures has been independently evaluated through the course of its development and found to have positive impact on pupils and teachers in terms of skills learned and the enjoyment of taking part in Open Futures activities. The impact at Camberwell Park goes significantly beyond the curriculum. As well as its adaptability to suit some of the specific needs of pupils at a specialist support school, it has been used to develop links with the wider community, with parents - and with the physical fabric of the school itself.

### Sensory awareness

As a school, Camberwell Park uses 'total communication' with all pupils, ensuring they are able to access their world in a meaningful way and able to communicate their choices and air their views. Open Futures strands appeal to all of the senses, supporting motivation in a way that is meaningful and accessible to them.

Allison Taylor explains: "It is important for our children to be able to learn in very practical ways by introducing them to exploring their world and experiencing things that will present challenges for them."

In Camberwell Park the *cookit* and *growit* strands relate closely to the development of sensory integration and sensory learning for their children.

"As many of our children can find classroom activities a challenge, having opportunities to learn in very practical and fun ways can be very motivating," says Mary Isherwood. "An example is seeing children who lack engagement in many activities in the classroom suddenly become animated, engaged (and skilled) in *growit* activities."

### Impact beyond the curriculum

Open Futures is much more than four activity strands. Once embedded into the curriculum across all the core curriculum subjects, the philosophy and the Open Futures holistic framework began to shape and complement other aspects of school life.

The four strands are excellent platforms for engagement with others to support learning in the school and enhance children's life experiences. Open Futures actively encourages schools to develop relationships with parents, organisations, businesses and other schools in their local community. The strands allow approachable and creative ways to start a conversation with these stakeholders; all of whom can support and collaborate with the school in many ways that are beneficial for both sides.

In Camberwell's case the value of having a child-friendly kitchen and developing the environment to include growing beds was acknowledged by the school early on, so much so that both were renovated and upgraded with the help of different grants and local support the school managed to obtain. The kitchen and 'rainforest garden' became a platform to deliver different curriculum subjects through an alternative 'classroom' setting, recognising the potential of learning in a different and stimulating environment. They also created opportunities for the school to connect with the community in different ways, learn to appreciate nature and healthy food and discover that learning can also be fun and useful!

In a number of areas, Camberwell Park has leveraged the Open Futures approach to launch a project or enhance an existing one.



askit

Pupil voice  
Asking questions  
Talking  
Listening  
Creating an open learning environment



growit

Identifying and caring for equipment  
Preparing pots  
Sensory awareness  
Planting bulbs and seeds  
Watering  
Plant management and care  
Reading for a purpose  
Writing for a purpose  
Environmental awareness

## Skills Gained



cookit

Use of equipment: Spreading, Tearing, Grating  
'Bridge' and 'Claw' to cut  
Mixing, Rolling, Kneading, Shaping  
Adding a topping and a filling to a case  
Rubbing, Brushing, Counting, Measuring  
Decision-making and Introduction of new tastes  
Sensory awareness and vocabulary  
Reading and writing for a purpose  
Eating a wider range of foods  
Sharing a meal



filmit

Introduction to iPads  
Cause and effect  
Using the touch pad  
Using the camera for stills and video  
Use of new software  
Development of a narrative  
Confidence to speak

## Community links

As part of the school's community programme, residents from 'The Byrons', a supported living centre next door to the school were invited to attend events such as the Christmas concert, carol singing and world book day.

Following conversations about other school activities, the residents joined one of the *cookit* training sessions with a group of disadvantaged children and their parents. The residents thoroughly enjoyed the session and were enthusiastic about children learning to cook. Later in the year the school filed an application for funding for a new kitchen to allow access to all children to fully participate in cookery lessons, and be offered as a community resource for residents from the Byrons. Since the kitchen was fitted, residents have continued to be a part of the school's cooking and gardening activities; joining the school's garden parties, Marie Curie Coffee Mornings, for which children bake cakes to be sold, and other events.

## Developing the school grounds and space

In March 2013 Carlos Tevez, then a Manchester City football player, came to Camberwell Park School to launch the newly established multi-sensory rainforest garden area. He met pupils and staff as well as receiving a tour of the school.

The project was part of Manchester City Football Club's award winning community scheme City in the Community Foundation (CITC) - 'One City' Disability Awareness programme.

In partnership with Bam Construction, Murraywood and the Princes Trust who gave their time and resources free of charge, CITC worked to regenerate the school grounds and develop the outdoor growing areas.

"We all feel very fortunate to have worked on this fantastic project. It is proof that when people come together for the good of the community, great outcomes follow," said Craig Bell, CITC's Community Cohesion Manager.

Carlos Tevez with the children



## Collaborating with other schools

In 2012 Camberwell Park School made links with Temple Primary, one of the local primary schools who had started the Open Futures programme at the same time. Both schools supported children to attend Open Futures learning events in their schools, which were very successful and appreciated by the children.

The collaboration developed understanding, equality and diversity between the children and built a supported network of sharing good practice for teaching staff and senior leaders.

Following the success, the two schools extended the collaboration with two other primary schools and formed a collaborative network, MC2SP (Manchester Challenge to Support Partnership). As a result, two new primary schools have since joined the Open Futures programme.

In 2013 the heads and deputies from Temple, Heald Place and St Augustine's Primary School visited Camberwell to see how the school was embedding the four strands of Open Futures into the curriculum and also how they measure the impact of the curriculum in relation to children's learning. During the visit the senior leaders looked at the curriculum documents and assessments, then observed four different lessons, which were being taught through the four Open Futures strands. They also looked at how Camberwell have been embedding other important aspects into the curriculum, which underpin their work as a school, including being an ECO school and Rights Respecting School.

The feedback from heads and deputies was very positive:

- "It was inspirational"
- "The learning was clear - there was progress visible in the lesson"
- "It was clear that the children knew what they had achieved"

In 2014 the school hosted a meeting with Manchester schools who were interested in joining the Open Futures programme. During the visit, they got a chance to see how the Open Futures approach is embedded in the school and curriculum. The visitors included staff from Northridge Specialist Support High School where most of the children from Camberwell Park move to. Northridge has since registered as an Open Futures school and began training in September 2015.

During 2015 the schools held four very successful 'super learning' days, one in each school of the MC2SP network.

## Parental engagement

Camberwell Park believes that parents/carers have an important role in supporting their children's learning at home and aim to work closely with them so they can understand what and how their child is learning and how they can help them.

One way of doing that is holding parent/carer workshops in school, where they can learn alongside other parents/carers about working with their child at home. Workshops have a range of topics from play, communication skills and safety issues, and all parents are invited to participate.

The workshops have made a difference to these parents. As one mum says: "It gets you motivated, you made an appointment to be here, whereas at home other things get in the way."

Through the workshops, teachers help parents focus on the things that really matter. The parents trust the staff at the school to know what's right. A father said: "It's nice to learn different ways to play with children and get new ideas because we don't know how to do this ... For example, we don't need to buy Play-Doh, we can make it from corn powder... We use Google yes but then you get a whole 'list' and we can't learn all of that and you don't know what is best ... but the school knows what is best so we just come here and they explain to us."

The workshops also provide an opportunity for parents to meet one another and feel they are not alone. One parent said: "In some workshops you see you are in the same boat, and you're struggling on with the same things or you get ideas from each other."

## Events, educational visits and after school

The school seized the opportunity to exhibit at RHS Tatton Park flower show as an opportunity to showcase the work of the school with Open Futures on a bigger stage. The particular focus was on *growit* and *cookit*, through exhibiting small gardens all on the theme of 'I can...' including 'I can play football', 'I can tell a story', 'I can count' and 'I can sing'. The children also carried out cooking demonstrations including the 'Camberwell Park smoothie' and the 'secret garden salad'.

**"Congratulations to all pupils and staff on such an inspirational story and display. I hope to share my photographs with our local schools to show them 'they can' do it too."**

*A comment in the school's visitors book at RHS Tatton Park*





## The future of Open Futures at Camberwell Park

“We want Open Futures to continue to be an integral part of our new school life”

Mary Isherwood, Headteacher

Camberwell Park is not a school that ‘sits still’, but it is clear about wishing to maintain its curriculum format, linking the range of thematic strands across all of the subject areas, and teaching using the Open Futures strands. As an Open Futures Flagship school, it continues to work with the Open Futures Trust and is keen to share its experience and expertise about how Open Futures can support teaching and learning.

Looking forward, these are exciting times for the school. After many years spent struggling in a school building that is in an extremely poor state of repair, it is now part of the Department for Education’s Priority School Building Programme and is currently in the construction phase for a new school building, which will be ready in 2016.

“We were clear from the start that we wanted Open Futures to continue to be an integral part of our new school life and have been able to keep this vision at the forefront of all building discussions and decisions,” explains Mary Isherwood. “This has included having an accessible kitchen in the new school with not only an indoor dining space but also an outdoor dining space and courtyard which includes a range of raised beds and planters for crop growing.

“We are extending our IT facilities, including a fully equipped IT immersive learning room. We have engaged the pupils as far as possible in ‘askit’ type activities to hear their views on what they would like in the new school. We also have longer term plans for the field which is attached to the school site and belongs to us – development of further crop growing areas and an outdoor classroom.”

Open Futures has become an integral part of Camberwell Park’s curriculum and Mary Isherwood’s intention is that it remains so. “We will continue to be a flagship school, a role model and advocate for Open Futures, and to work with Lucy and the board of Trustees in new strategic ways when our views are sought to ensure the future development of Open Futures”, she says.

“We will continue to build on and develop our existing work and respond to the changing needs of our pupils. We will re-establish opportunities to review and refresh training for staff and children, involving parents and community groups where possible. “

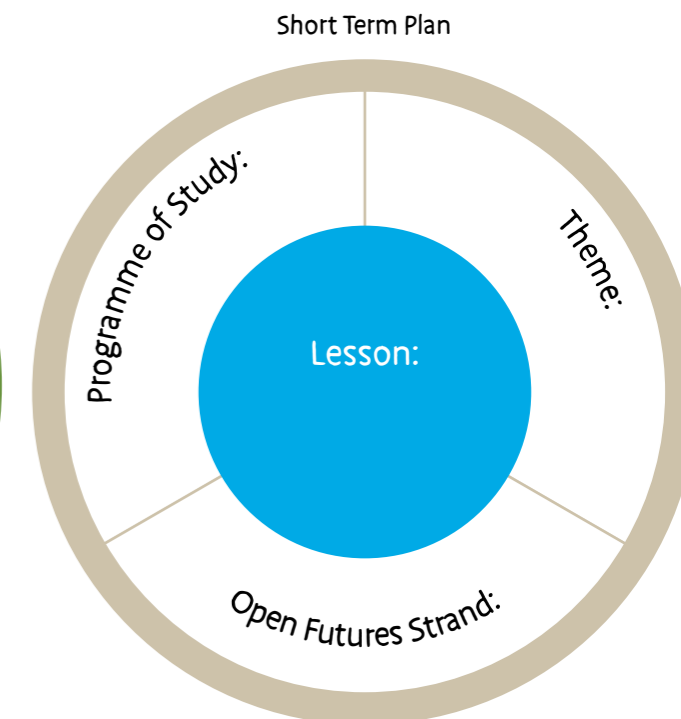
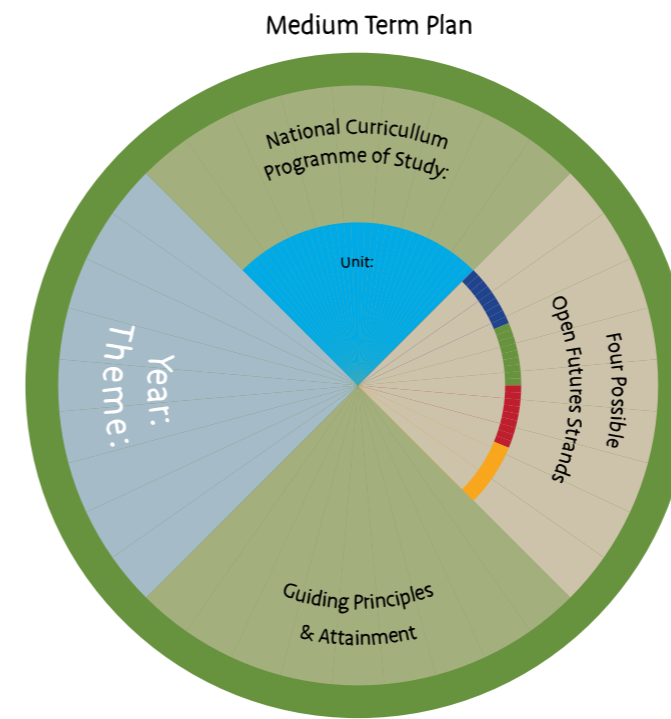
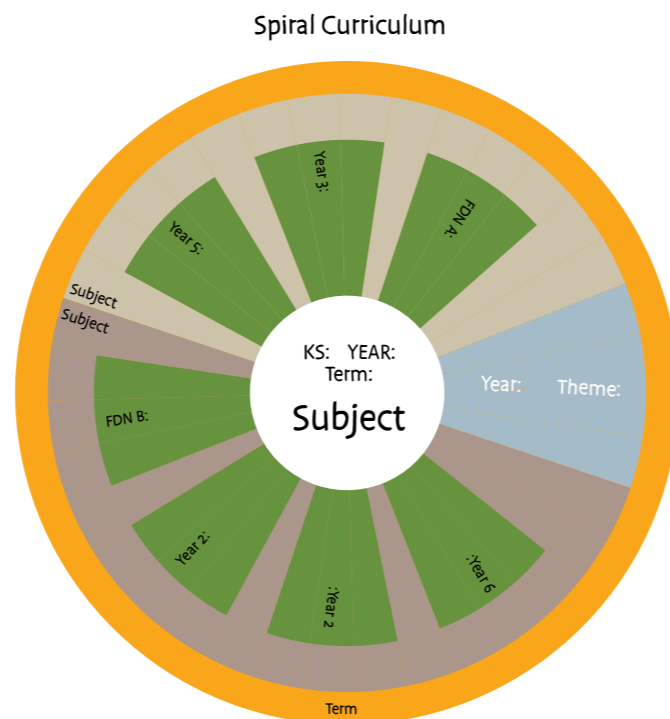
## Implementing Open Futures strands

The following exercises are designed to support teachers wishing to develop lessons using Open Futures approaches within the national curriculum or a spiral curriculum such as at Camberwell Park Special School.

During the early stages of Open Futures, teachers have found it useful to teach discrete lessons in the Open Futures strands to help build confidence in those areas. As confidence and skills develop, new possibilities emerge for embedding Open Futures strands into the curriculum.

### Exercise 1

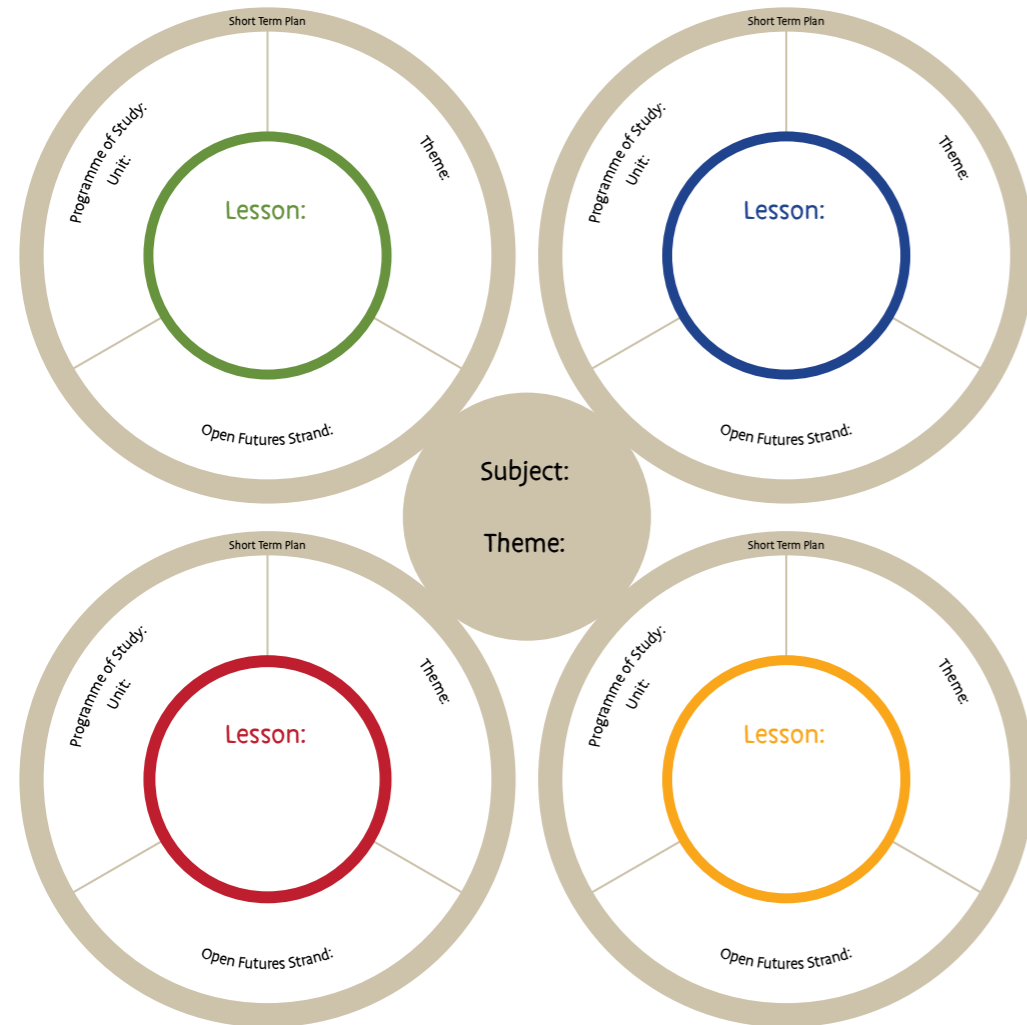
1. Choose a national curriculum subject.
2. Think of two umbrella themes. These will steer the learning across all year groups and will ensure a clear learning thread across all the years.
3. Choose which year will be taught through each of the two umbrella subject themes.
4. Allocate for each year a theme that will be the vehicle to deliver the subject. There should be a clear logical connection to the umbrella subject theme for that year. This is to ensure there will be a coherent link to prior learning through the years.
5. Now you have the base. Choose one year and its leading theme and fill in the medium term plan and then the short term plan accordingly.



Further resources are available on the Open Futures website [www.openfutures.com](http://www.openfutures.com). CPD and training opportunities are available on the website or by contacting [hello@openfutures.com](mailto:hello@openfutures.com)

## Exercise 2

Select a National Curriculum subject and theme for the Open Futures strands given in the template. Think of the possible connections between them. Worked examples are shown on pages 42 and 43. For inspiration, a list of themes at Camberwell Park is shown in the diagram on page 33.



## Acknowledgements

“I am Passionate about the children, their families and the school and the contribution that Open Futures makes. I respect all members of the school team. I am Organised in my roles and responsibilities. I Understand the different needs of the learners and how we can best support them. I am Dedicated to ensure our children receive and achieve the best. I am a very PROUD headteacher indeed.”

Mary Isherwood, Headteacher since 2006.



“I love Camberwell Park School because I am in a privileged position to support some very vulnerable children who have to face adversity and challenge on a daily basis. I am PROUD to see them grow and flourish by reaching their potential. I am passionate about my key responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, behaviour and pupil attendance; aspects of school life that are dependent upon developing trusting relationships.”

Allison Taylor, Deputy Headteacher since 1997.



“I am PROUD to work in such a wonderful school. A school where the pupils are children first and someone with a disability second. A school where all the staff ensure that the children have access to all the opportunities and have the skills to adapt these to meet the needs of our children. Where we celebrate the children’s abilities and ensure they are the best they can be.”

Alison Randall, Assistant Headteacher since 2012.



## References

Philosophy For Children  
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evaluation/projects/philosophy-for-children/>

Mary Isherwood's blog  
<http://www.camberwellpark.manchester.dbprimary.com/manchester/primary/camberwellpark/site/pages/headteachersblog>

Support for SENCOs at Nasen  
[www.nasen.org.uk](http://www.nasen.org.uk)

[www.helenhamlyntrust.org](http://www.helenhamlyntrust.org)



**Open Futures**



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Designed by Abbie Vickress. Curriculum diagrams by Magda Rok

Photographs by SIRA studio, staff at Camberwell Park, and Magda Rok

Funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust

Thanks also to:  
Sue Macleod, Sandra Rayner, Anna Hodgson, Gilly Gawthorne, Rama Gheerawo, Margaret Durkan, Camberwell teachers, students and parents

ISBN: 978-0-9566190-1-3

Further information is available at the Open Futures and Camberwell Park websites:

[www.openfutures.com](http://www.openfutures.com)  
[www.camberwellpark.manchester.dbprimary.com](http://www.camberwellpark.manchester.dbprimary.com)



## A More Creative Curriculum

Open Futures at Camberwell Park Specialist Support School

In 2011, Camberwell Park Specialist Support School in Manchester embarked on a training programme with Open Futures, a unique educational programme that helps teachers to develop pupils' ability 'to think and to do'. This book introduces Open Futures and tells the story of how it came to be embraced and embedded at Camberwell Park, showing how Open Futures's four learning strands - *askit*, *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit* - came to develop and amplify the school's existing curriculum, with huge impacts for staff, pupils and the wider school community.

