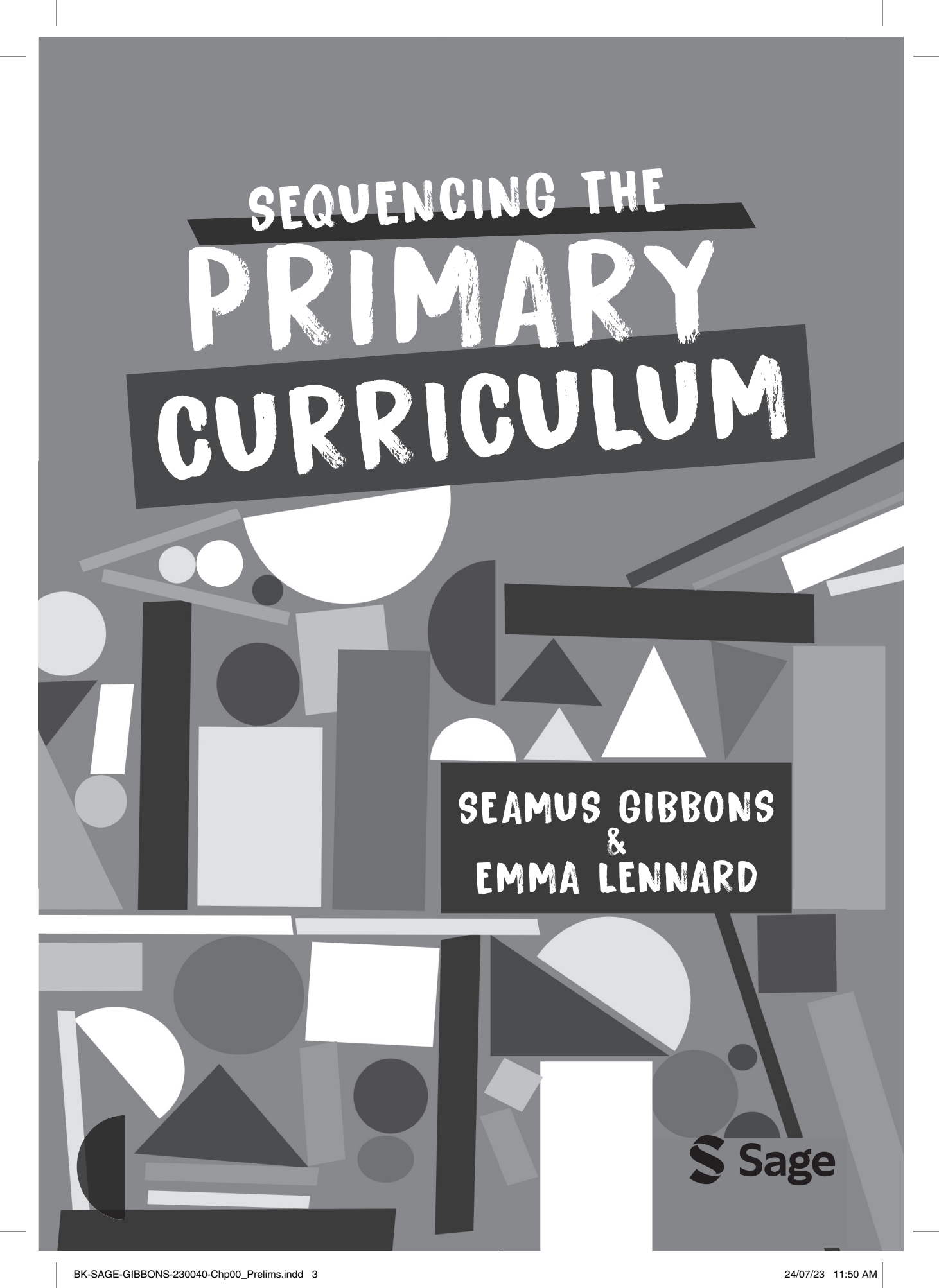


SEQUENCING THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM





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Dedicated to Nicole Quaradeghini
For the teacher you were and the teacher you would have become.
With our love.

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About the Authors

Seamus Gibbons is currently the Executive Principal for a number of London primary schools and the primary phase lead for the initial teacher training programme of the largest multi-academy trust in the country (which was recently graded as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted). Seamus has led schools to achieve the Ofsted 'Outstanding' rating and passionately believes in the positive foundation primary education sets for the future success of all children, regardless of background. Seamus has a Masters in Effective Learning (distinction) from the Institute of Education and has also achieved the National Qualification for Executive Leadership. He was a member of the DfE's headteacher reference group for over five years and when he is not engaged in all things education, Seamus loves to travel and see as much of the world as possible.

Emma Lennard is an independent primary curriculum advisor, working with schools across the country. She currently works with the Knowledge Schools Trust to develop the Primary Knowledge Curriculum; writing curriculum content, developing CPD for teachers and delivering training. Emma also delivers initial teacher training for a national multi-academy trust. She previously worked with the Westminster-based think-tank, Civitas, developing the Core Knowledge UK curriculum. Emma has supported DfE panels on National Professional Qualifications and Early Years. Before completing a PGCE with the Primary Catholic Partnership in Southampton and then teaching in central London, Emma worked for a member of the European Parliament in Brussels and studied International Relations at the University of Exeter. Emma lives in London with her husband and their two young boys, who frequently remind her that she still has lots to learn about the world.

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How to Use this Book

This book is aimed at trainee teachers, early career teachers and teachers who are interested in primary **curriculum** design.

We have written this book so that you can dip in and out of the chapters, but we recommend reading the first section of the book including, 'What is Curriculum?', 'The National Curriculum', 'A Coherent, Sequenced Primary Curriculum' and 'Diversity and Inclusion' first. Content within these chapters will be referred to throughout the book.

At the end of each chapter, there are questions to reflect upon. These might form part of a group exercise, be used for individual study, or they might be questions you can ask experts in school guardians and carers.

The content of this book is a culmination of our experience of working as teachers and then leaders and specialists within school. We know we cannot tell you everything you need to know about the curriculum in one book – that would be an impossible task. We hope that this book will help to focus your thinking about the primary curriculum, and that you will be able to use it as a stepping stone to further your own understanding. As teachers in the early stages of your careers, you will be learning more than this book could ever teach you, but we hope to have contributed in a small way to your journey into this wonderful profession.

Do question and challenge the content of this book, read widely, establish your own understanding, and keep asking yourself if you are as close to the truth as you can be. Education is evolving and changing at a rapid pace, so we need to be adaptable, open-minded and always willing to learn. Most importantly, keep the children you teach at the centre of every decision you make; everything we do as teachers is for them.

Thank you from us both for opening this book and for your service to the children you teach.

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The National Curriculum document outlines the core content primary schools need to teach. It is up to schools to add the detail, to decide how they sequence the materials so that they build knowledge in small steps, to make the pedagogical choices needed to deliver the curriculum, and to choose the individual contexts and materials the school will use to bring the curriculum to life. Schools bring the curriculum to children, so we must think about the children we are serving.

Whilst this book is primarily about sequencing and knowing the requirements of each discipline, we feel it is essential for new teachers to reflect upon diversity and inclusion. It is important to always consider how a curriculum will mirror the diverse population our children live within in this country.

We live in communities that may have a range of different languages, ethnic groups, religious beliefs, disabilities, sexual orientations, and family set-ups. It is important that our children see themselves within the curriculum they are learning. Carefully selecting content which reflects this is an important part of curriculum development. When we make curriculum choices, we are telling a story. As teachers, we may not realise it, but we hold power; the power to decide what story we tell our children about the world we live in. Not only should we consider the essential people, places, processes and events that children must learn about, but we need to also ask, whose voices are left unheard? Why are many of the famous scientists in history male? What prevented women from achieving the same successes at the time? Are people from black and global majority communities underrepresented in our school curriculum? Through our curriculum choices, we can ensure that children in our schools learn about the achievements of a diverse range of people.

Consider, for a moment, the power of a young child seeing an astronomer in a science lesson that looks like them, who perhaps has the same skin colour, speaks the same language, has a disability. What message does this send to that child?

As we design a curriculum, at top level, some questions we should be reflecting on are as follows:

- What does a child working through our curriculum see?
- Who are the significant people we study?
- Do pupils see diverse role models from different ethnic backgrounds?
- Are we reflecting on our own unconscious biases?
- Are people with special needs and disabilities represented positively?
- Does the curriculum challenge gender stereotypes?
- How are different family set-ups and members of the LGBTQ+ community represented?
- How do children see themselves within the curriculum?

There is much literature available to support schools in ensuring that their school curriculum represents diversity and inclusion, however below we have provided some specific examples of content from the National Curriculum for you to reflect on, using some of the questions below. The questions and reflections are transferable to different subjects.

Art and Design

The art and design curriculum requires children to learn about great artists, architects and designers, and this is a good opportunity for us to consider which individuals we teach the children about.

Reflection questions

- Do the artists, architects and designers selected reflect a range of different ethnic backgrounds?
- Are there any local people who reflect the local community who could be included in the curriculum? Or if the local community is not very diverse, how will you broaden children's knowledge of diversity in these areas of art and design?
- Do you openly teach about some of the barriers these people faced in their lives? For example, is an artist struggling with mental health issues?
- Is there a local architect who can come and speak to the children?

Computing

The computing curriculum requires us to teach children about algorithms, coding and e-safety. It is possible to teach these aspects of the curriculum without including a thread of diversity and inclusion, but we know that girls are less likely to study STEM when they are older and that those from disadvantaged backgrounds do not always have access to the same computing resources as those enjoying greater affluence at home. Therefore, it is essential that these children see themselves within the computing curriculum.

Reflection questions

- Are there posters/visuals of women in computing for children to see? Can you invite some females who work in technology to inspire and speak to the children?
- When teaching e-safety, are the resources reflective of a range of individuals? Does the curriculum consider how those with a special need may face unique difficulties depending on their need? Are you ensuring that the materials used to teach these lessons do not represent one type of person as being the wrongdoer in the scenarios presented?

Design and Technology

In the design and technology (D&T) curriculum, we are required to teach cooking and nutrition as one element. This provides us with the opportunity to introduce children to cuisines and traditions from around the world. We can also consider some designers and engineers that children may come across when looking at D&T.

Reflection questions

- Which chefs have you introduced to the children? How do they reflect diversity?
- Which ingredients are used for cooking? Which countries do these come from?
- Are there local restaurants or parents/carers within the school community who the school can engage with?
- Which designers, engineers or technology specialists do children encounter in the curriculum?

English

At the heart of the English curriculum is developing a love of reading, and we should consider carefully how our reading curriculum represents diversity and inclusion.

Reflection questions

- Which picture books do you use within your school and as part of your curriculum? Do they represent a range of different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, family set-ups, and people with disabilities? Do we ever risk telling a single story? For example, *Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Browne is a popular choice in the early years, however could children develop the misconception that all African children live in small villages? How do we counter this whilst still sharing this lovely story?
- Which poets and authors have been chosen for texts in the curriculum? Do they represent a range of different writers? Does the school library/reading area in the school exemplify diversity?
- Is there a sufficient and diverse range of non-fiction books which represent a wide range of inspiring people? Countries and places of the world? A range of religions?

Geography

Pupils develop their locational knowledge across the KS1 and KS2 curriculum – they need to know the different continents and locate the world's countries. This is a great opportunity for us to reflect on what our children already know about the cultures and world they live in, and about how our geography curriculum can expand their knowledge.

Reflection questions

- What locational knowledge does your curriculum develop? Does it represent a range of places? Do children get to compare where they live with a range of different locations?
- When choosing field study/locations to visit, do children visit diverse places which will broaden their knowledge of the wider world?

History

Just as in art and design, in history we want children to learn about significant individuals in this discipline. In KS2, we are also required to teach children about a non-European society.

Reflection questions

- Which significant people have we included in our history curriculum? Are they all white or Western? Does the curriculum include how these significant individuals have shaped our world today?
- How is black history threaded through your curriculum? How do you ensure it is not just a one-off event and that it is something which is meaningfully integrated?
- What non-European society features within your history curriculum? How does this broaden your children's knowledge?
- Does your curriculum teach about colonialism? Does it avoid teaching that places were 'discovered' when there were already people living there, just not white British people?

Maths

The maths curriculum focuses on our children developing their reasoning, problem solving and fluency as they progress through the primary curriculum. Whilst there is no direct requirement to teach about individuals, there is still an opportunity to naturally weave elements of diversity into the maths curriculum.

Reflection questions

- Do the word problems or reasoning presented to children naturally reference a diverse range of people? For example, they could reference a child having two mothers; someone visiting a Mosque; the circumference of a wheelchair wheel; a range of different names, etc.
- When discussing the importance of maths in the real world, does the curriculum link with some significant mathematicians who reflect diversity in the subject?
- If your school has a maths or enterprise week, what speakers could the school bring in who will reflect inclusion and diversity?

Music

There is explicit reference in the music curriculum to children learning music from a range of musicians and various traditions. It is important that we sequence this, so that children are exposed to a range of different musicians as well as to music from different cultures. It is important that we, as teachers, avoid making presumptions that certain groups of children will not like a particular style of music, and instead provide them with the opportunity to experience and learn the breadth of the music world.

Reflection questions

- Which musicians do children learn about and hear in the music curriculum? Are the choices we have made diverse?
- What musical traditions are shared with children? Do they reflect the wider world?
- Do children get exposed to and learn to value a range of music from different countries and cultures?

Physical Education

As part of the PE curriculum, we need to teach a range of competitive sports. It is at school level that we can carefully choose what sports we teach and the significant sporting individuals who inspire these sports. This is the perfect subject to challenge stereotypes around only girls being good at dance or football being a male-only sport. We can also find inspiration in the wide range of excellent Paralympians and record breakers from all countries around the world.

Reflection questions

- When playing a range of sports is there a deliberately planned opportunity to tackle potential stereotypes?
- Are a range of sports people used to inspire the children in different sports? Do children see people who look like them playing the different sports we teach?
- How do we ensure we have selected sports which all children can access – for example, how will a child in a wheelchair access these sports?

The above provides some examples of how we can reflect upon each discipline through the lens of diversity and inclusion. We can use these reflection questions to support us in a range of different subjects.

An important aspect of this is that the diversity and inclusion elements of our curriculum are authentic and not a bolt on to our curriculum offer. Diversity and inclusion should be woven meaningfully through the curriculum, and we should continue to reflect upon it to ensure we are doing the best we can to reflect the world our children live in today.

Religious Education

Whilst there is not an agreed curriculum for religious education, it is still important we have a critical lens when developing an RE curriculum or purchasing a particular scheme. There is a requirement that the RE teaching in the curriculum has a higher proportion of Christianity, but this subject is key to developing tolerance of all beliefs. In school, we are required to promote 'fundamental British values' and at the heart of this is tolerance for different beliefs.

Reflection questions

- When do children encounter different religions in the curriculum? Do they get to learn about their religion in KS1? If not, what is the rationale for this?
- Are there trips planned to all places of worship? If it is not possible to get to a particular place of worship, how is this countered? Is a visitor invited in? Could technology allow for a virtual tour?
- What about those who do not have a specific religion – how are their views and beliefs included in the curriculum sensitively?

Signposts to Additional Resources

Useful links to read more around diversity in the curriculum:

- Black Curriculum – <https://theblackcurriculum.com>
- Diverse Educators – www.diverseeducators.co.uk/diversifying-the-curriculum-a-perspective
- Karin Doull – *Teaching a Diverse Primary Curriculum* (Exeter: Learning Matters, 2022)
- Promoting fundamental British values as part of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) in school – www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc