

The Inquiry Process



Dear Parents / Caregivers

This leaflet aims to give you guidance on the inquiry approach to teaching and learning which is followed at TEMIS.

Inquiry learning is an active thinking and learning process. It is essentially a student-centred learning approach in which the learner is actively involved in the process. It is based on the belief that students must be actively engaged in the process of investigating, processing, organising, synthesising, refining and extending their knowledge within a topic. Inquiry learning encourages learners to form concepts and generalisations instead of being told simple answers to more complex questions.

At all levels, inquiry is guided by teachers. Some, or many of the decisions, about inquiry can be made by the students, depending on the situation. Teachers take into account the abilities and experiences of the students when deciding how much choice and power should be given to students.

Inquiry learning can have different starting points and be implemented in different ways but the characteristics of inquiry remain basically the same. Inquiries can be shared as a whole class or can be personal (negotiated with individual learners). All inquiries are based on a question related to an issue, problem or desired action. These questions are underpinned by key concepts.

The inquiry process involves:

- planned, direct and experiential activities that provide opportunities for students to pose questions and gather information.
- activities that help students to organise new information and skills in a way that assists them to form concepts and generalisations about their world.
- opportunities for students to demonstrate what they have learnt (knowledge and skills).
- opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills to new or different situations.

The inquiry approach to teaching and learning is used in schools throughout Canada and Australia, embedded within the UK curriculum and is the basis of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IBPYP).

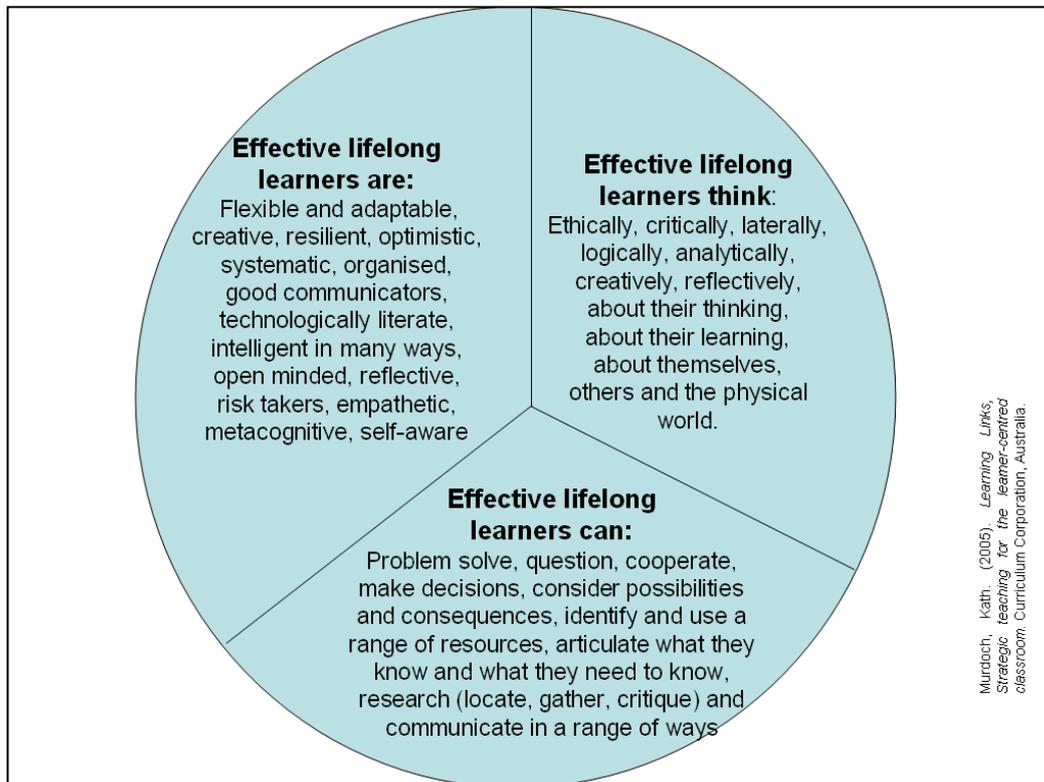
Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher.

The TEMIS Team

Updated on 06/02/14

Why is the inquiry process used at TEMIS?

We cannot teach children everything they need to know. In a world of rapidly changing information and technologies our role as educators must focus on equipping our students with the necessary skills and qualities to become independent and lifelong learners. As teachers our collective goal must be to provide opportunities for our students to develop these transferable skills so that they become proficient at selecting, applying and critiquing their learning across a range of contexts.

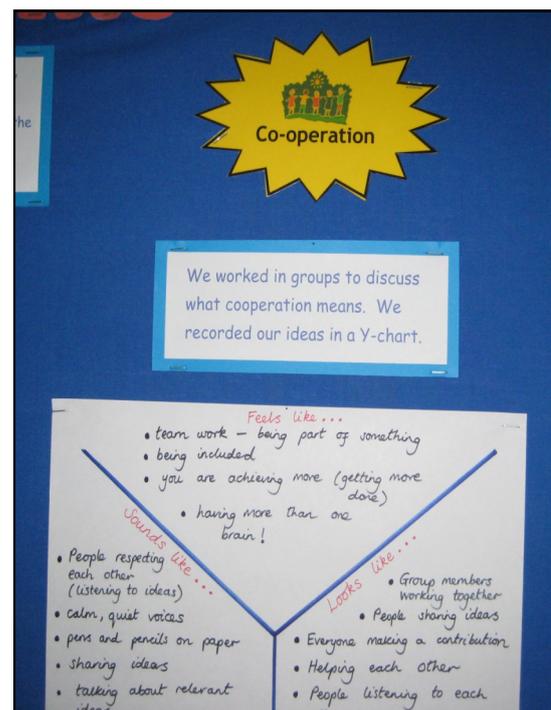


KEY SKILLS

These skills are not discipline specific and can be considered the province of all teachers working with any age group. Various policy documents around the UK, Australia and across the world have set out to describe what these skills and qualities are. While there are differences in the emphasis given, there is general agreement about many of the core skills and qualities.

At TEMIS students focus on developing seven key skills through the inquiry process:

- **Communication**
- **Co-operation**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Research**
- **Task Management**
- **Thinking Critically**
- **Using Technology**



What is the inquiry process followed at TEMIS?

Each inquiry unit is based around a complex question. This complex question is usually split into two or three contributing questions which will allow students to answer the complex question. Each con-

Stage of Process	Purpose	Sample Activities
Tuning In 	Engage & motivate Gather prior knowledge Stimulate the inquiry/ set the scene.	Brainstorming (oral and written) Children share personal experiences Writing initial definitions
Finding Out 	Collecting data and information from a variety of resources.	Using a range of printed, visual audio and digital texts. Guest Speakers Excursions
Sorting Out 	Collate and organise information. Communicate information found.	Groups report back orally Recording onto retrieval charts Critical analysis of information
Going Further 	Searching for more information to extend and enrich understanding. Raising new questions Challenging assumptions	Make links between the understandings they have developed. Take action to improve a situation.
Reflecting & Acting 	Reflection of the learning. Taking action	Group/class discussions Presentations Letter Writing Personal Action Self-evaluations Reflection on process
Making Connections (throughout the Inquiry Unit)	Drawing Conclusions about what they have learnt Connecting to own experiences.	View ideas from positions other than their own Students clarify their own attitudes and values. Identifying and solving 'real' problems

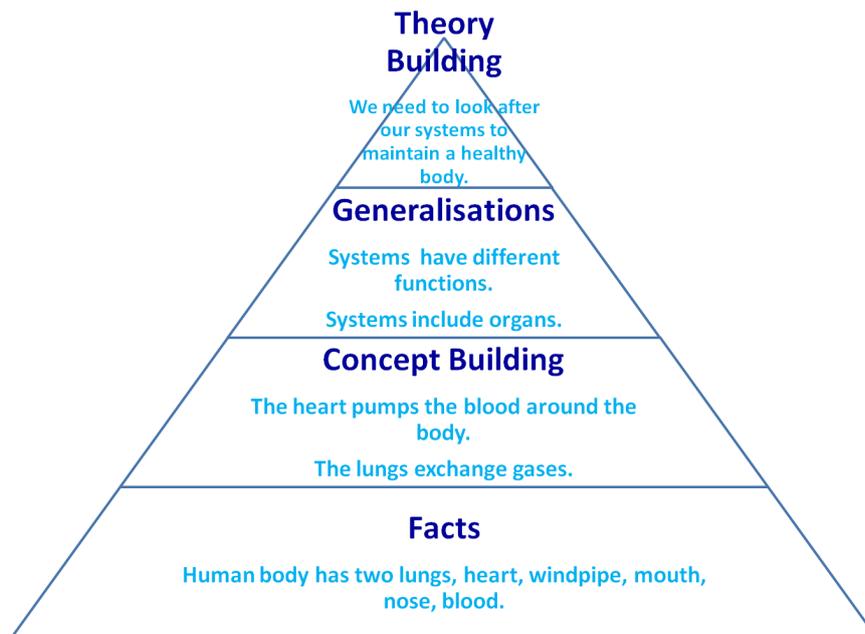
Integrated Inquiry Units

At TEMIS the majority of the inquiry units students experience follow an integrated approach to learning. An integrated curriculum refers to the organisation of teaching and learning experiences in which significant content, across and within subject areas, is selected to develop students' understanding of the world.

Students develop important understandings, concepts and skills that apply across the traditional constraints of individual subject areas. Learning is more powerful when content, processes and skills are developed and extended in meaningful, integrated contexts where students construct their own learning.

How does inquiry learning promote thinking skills?

The inquiry process provides students with opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Higher order thinking is essential in many aspects of learning. For example, to ensure successful problem solving, effective conflict resolutions, active citizenship, appropriate application of ideas to various situations and to facilitate lifelong learning. Learning is enhanced when learners are challenged and taken beyond their comfort zone.



The formation of understandings, or generalisations, requires a higher level of thinking which takes place after learning or information gained from facts and concepts has been organised. When forming understandings or generalisations, learners make links between two or more concepts that have developed from groups of facts. The grouping together of generalisations and understandings can lead to the development of theories.

What does the inquiry approach look like in the classroom?

- Classrooms in each level of the school will be similar but do not have to be identical.
- Word banks displayed.
- Complex question and inquiry questions displayed.
- Stages of the inquiry process labelled.
- Range of work reflecting process: brainstorm re-arranged into concept maps, note taking, drafts, finished products.
- Using information for another purpose e.g written genre.
- Students building on prior knowledge and activities.
- Process based – using facts/concepts to develop theories and generalisations.
- Range of graphic organisers.