



# Ormskirk Church of England Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr G.Storch B.Ed. (Hons) P.G. Dip. Psych. N.P.Q.H.

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you are well, and you and your children have settled into the new academic year. In previous Headteacher letters, Mr Storch has referenced that as a school one of our main priorities is to support children in developing a 'deep' knowledge of History, Geography and Science with the hope that they will know more and remember more. To do this, we will be applying the principles of retrieval practice and knowledge organisers.

## **What is retrieval practice?**

Retrieval practice is a teaching and learning strategy that can be used inside or outside of the classroom to help children learn. Retrieval practice focuses on getting information out of the memory. Through the act of retrieval, which involves recalling information through writing or verbally, that memory is then strengthened. Retrieval practice helps memory and therefore helps to improve learning. In lessons, teachers will be starting to regularly quiz their classes on what they have studied previously. This is not a high stakes test or assessment, but instead a way to check what students can or cannot remember and to also help improve their memory, knowledge and confidence. There has been a lot of research published that tells us this is an effective strategy for all learners of all ages. The more children practice recalling information from memory, the easier that information will become to recall in the future.

## **What are knowledge organisers?**

Knowledge organisers are a summary of the key facts and essential knowledge that pupils need about a unit of work or a curriculum subject. They should be no more than one side of A4 with all the information broken down into easily digestible chunks.

## **What are the benefits of retrieval practice?**

- It's a powerful strategy to help children learn.
- It identifies where the gaps in knowledge are.
- Regular retrieval practice can boost confidence.

## **What are the benefits of knowledge organisers?**

- A knowledge organiser makes the teacher think hard about what will be taught.
- Knowledge organisers are an endless source of meaningful homework activities.
- Knowledge organisers are an excellent tool for inclusion.
- Knowledge organisers create opportunities for spaced retrieval practice.
- Used appropriately, knowledge organisers can increase retention of facts

Last academic year, Year 4 trialled the use of retrieval practice and knowledge organisers. The impact of this was largely positive and some of the feedback is outlined below.



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- “Retrieval practice is really fun because you have to remember the lessons the day before and knowledge organisers give you key information about easy and hard words and they tell you their meaning.”
- “I think they are both a good idea and that you should carry on using them because they help a lot. Retrieval tasks are easy and fun and a nice way to help me remember what we did in the last lesson.”

## **How are Ormskirk CE going to implement retrieval practice and knowledge organisers?**

At our inset in September, we shared with staff an overview of retrieval practice and knowledge organisers and discussed how it could be implemented in our practice. From this, we have taken the decision to use them in the following way. In Reception, they will be used to support parents in initiating conversations with their children about their learning. They will also support teachers with planning and will be displayed in classrooms to promote discussions during adult to child interactions. From Y1-Y6, we will use them in History, Geography and Science initially to ensure children know more and remember more in these subjects. Children will be sent home with a copy of their knowledge organiser the half term after the content has been taught.

In the meantime, teachers will be reading [Retrieval Practice: Primary: A guide for primary teachers and leaders](#) and undertaking collaborative work within school to understand further how retrieval practice can be used and developed in the following ways:

- Multiple Choice and Short Answer Questions
- Verbal Retrieval Practice- talking about what we can remember
- Vocabulary development
- Retrieval Cues and Free Recall

As the academic year progresses, and teachers gain a further understanding of how to implement some aspects of this practice. We hope that we will see an improvement in children’s retention of key knowledge.

## **How is retrieval practice different from testing/assessments?**

- The focus is ‘low stakes’ this is different.
- Quizzes & tasks are fun, engaging & enjoyable.
- Scores & results are not formally recorded.
- Cues & prompts can be provided to offer support

## **How can you use retrieval practice at home?**

Attached to this letter, is a parents’ guide to using knowledge organisers which may help you in supporting your children at home. You can also support them in the following ways:

- Ask questions about content studied in class.
- Ask about key vocabulary and the meaning.
- Encourage your child to quiz themselves.



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- It can be fun, enjoyable and rewarding!
- Ask questions about last term or further back!

Finally, if you would like to learn more about retrieval practice you may want to explore the following websites:

- <https://www.retrievalpractice.org/>
- <https://www.learningscientists.org/>

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will try and assist you as best I can.

Kind Regards,

Simon Boyd  
(Deputy Headteacher)



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