Topic Overview – National Curriculum, England

Each school is different and will timetable units in the order that suits them. This document helps subject leaders think about some of the issues that might affect those choices.

You will notice that there are not six units – one for each half term. Some units may need more time than one half term for your children to fully cover all the objectives. You will also want to adapt the science curriculum for your local circumstances and the ethos of your school. Many schools, for example, are keen to focus on climate challenge and the science involved. As a core subject, Science should be taught regularly throughout the whole year.

Year 1 units	Think about		Year 2 units	Think about
Plants	This involves children knowing the names of different plants and trees, as well as growing plants. For growing, it makes sense to timetable in the spring or summer terms, but children will need to get the chance to see different flowers and plants across the year.		Plants	This involves growing seeds and bulbs, so it makes sense to timetable in the spring/summer but you might want to plant spring bulbs in the autumn
Animals including humans	The senses element of this unit can provide a gentle introduction to Y1 science but it also includes sorting animals by what they eat (herbivore, carnivore and omnivore) and also by whether they are mammals, reptiles, fish, birds or amphibians. You might find that this works better later in the academic year. You could split the unit across two half terms at different points of the year.		Animals including humans	This unit can be taught at any time during the year.
Seasons	This needs to be timetabled across the whole year to ensure children discuss and observe every season. It combines well with some of the plants objectives; naming different plants and also classifying evergreen and deciduous trees.		Living things and their habitats	This includes exploring local habitats and micro habitats so it is best to cover this when there are plenty of minibeasts around and the weather is good for working outside. Winter is probably best

				avoided. It could be split across two terms.
Everyday materials	This unit introduces the names and properties of simple materials and can be taught at any point during the year.		Uses of everyday materials	This unit introduces purpose and suitability when considering what objects are made of. This can work well at any time of the year.

Year 3 units	Think about		Year 4 units	Think about
Plants	This unit involves exploring the conditions for growth so is best in spring or summer.		Living things and their habitats	The guidance with this unit says "Pupils should use the local environment throughout the year to raise and answer questions that help them to identify and study plants and animals in their habitat." You could timetable it for the beginning of the school year and then revisit elements throughout each term.
Animals including Humans	This unit can be taught at any time during the year.		Animals including Humans	This unit can be taught at any time during the year.
Light	This unit explores shadows so you might want to consider when there is likely to be plenty of sunshine. A good summer unit.		States of matter	This unit can be taught at any time during the year. Children often get confused between evaporation and condensation, so you might want to take a pause after teaching evaporation and then return to condensation and the water cycle later.
Forces and Magnets	Many schools pick this as the first unit in Y3, simply because it is very straightforward and it helps children make the transition from KS1 science to KS2. It could be timetabled at any point during the year.		Sound	Children really need to have been introduced to solids, liquids and gases and their properties before this unit. As a result it makes sense to timetable after States of Matter.

Rocks	This unit can be a little bit more challenging for children; you might not want to start the year with it, but there are no seasonal considerations.		Electricity	This unit can be taught at any time during the year.

Year 5 units	Think about		Year 6 units	Think about
Living things and their habitats	This unit focuses on plant and animal life cycles. It involves understanding asexual reproduction in plants. You might want the unit to coincide with growing potatoes(tubers) or strawberries (runners). Spring is also the time to see lots of the off-spring of animals: tadpoles, caterpillars and bird eggs such as chickens or ducks.		Living things and their habitats	This unit involves the use of classification keys and understanding how plants are classified. It works best at times of the year when there are lots of plants and invertebrates to observe. Avoid the winter months.
Animals including humans	This is the human life cycle and can be taught at any point during the year. You might want to timetable this to coincide with when PSHE covers human reproduction.		Animals including humans	This covers the circulatory system and can be taught at any point in the year.
Properties and changing materials	This is a very substantial unit and you should expect it to cover a whole term. It can be taught at any point during the year.		Evolution and inheritance	Many schools teach it towards the end of the year but it can be taught at any time.
Forces	This unit can be taught at any point during the year but it does make sense to teach the concept of gravity before the Earth and Space Unit. Alternatively, you could cover that objective at the beginning of the Space unit.		Light	Unlike the Y3 unit, this unit work best when there isn't too much sun as children need to be able to see that light travels in straight lines and measure shadows made in a controlled environment. This is easier to teach in winter.

Earth and Space	Many schools teach this during the winter months as it is easier to observe the night sky when the days are shorter.		Electricity	This unit can be taught at any time during the year.