

# Our Curriculum

What are the principles that underpin our curriculum?

What is our approach to teaching and learning?

## Section One: Principles and Pedagogy



*Article 28: Children have a right to learn and go to school*



*Article 29: Children have the right to become the best that you can be*

### What is our aim?

In the Heathland Whitefriars Federation, the driving principles behind our approach to teaching and learning are:

- *To provide all pupils with a curriculum of the highest quality.*
- *To have high aspirations for every pupil.*
- *To ensure that, in the way we support children in their learning, we provide a learning culture that is positive, supportive, and engaging.*
- *To equip pupils to be successful global citizens.*

This document sets out how our curriculum is designed to support these aims.

### What is our approach to teaching and learning?

The learning experiences that we organise and offer to our children aim to have the following characteristics:

- Based on an understanding of metacognition, developing an awareness of how we think and learn
- Grounded in high quality subject specific knowledge
- Engage the learner to be active
- Language rich, with opportunities to speak, hear and write new vocabulary systematically
- Creative experiences which sparkle
- Develop independence and choice, including play and exploration
- Based on questions and enquiry, making links in an interconnected curriculum where they are meaningful and helpful to support learning to enter the long-term memory

- Develop problem solving approaches and resilience
- Next steps teaching based upon secure assessment and high expectations
- A celebration of diversity
- Designed with the preparation for the next stage of education in mind



*Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen and be listened to.*

### **What are our values?**

Our ethos and curriculum is underpinned but a set of positive, shared values which help us to work and learn with one another cooperatively and with respect. We learn the importance of friendship and unity, and how to approach life with positivity and hope. These values make our school community happy and harmonious, a fun place, where children feel secure. Our values are important to everyone in our school community. The whole staff and all children are involved in promoting values and recognising their positive effects around the school. The values have been selected by children and staff as values which are important now, and will be importance throughout life.

### **What is the role of children's rights?**

As a Gold Rights Respecting school, we use children's rights to underpin everything we do and learn. Children explore the rights of every child and how these should be respected; they are embedded in our curriculum, and linked closely to our values. These rights help to shape our work within the community and our teaching around being a global citizen, prepared for their next stage of life. Parents and the community are fully included on this journey and are encouraged to use the universal language at home.

Our programme of assemblies, our circle time opportunities and focus on values and rights in the classroom are an essential part of our curriculum and children's personal development.

## **Section Two: Teaching and Learning**



*Article 3: The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.*

### **How is our curriculum organised?**

The curriculum at Heathland is designed to build knowledge and understanding over time, with content carefully selected to develop children's subject specific learning. This is shaped by progression maps and detailed curriculum mapping in each subject. The curriculum is clearly structured to develop core skills, alongside broad and rich experiences of diverse

topics where we build connections that are meaningful. This is in the context of an environment which prioritises the teaching of how the brain works, and supports personal, social and emotional development through our focus on our school values and children's rights.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and National Curriculum focus our teaching to include and encourage the following:

- Exploration through play
- Developing resilience
- Training the mind and body to develop motivation and focus
- Critical thinking
- Encouraging creativity
- Recognising patterns and making links
- Promoting social, moral, social and cultural development
- Appreciation of human achievement
- Using assessment to unpick next steps and set targets
- A commitment to reducing barriers to progress
- Catering for those whose English is an additional language
- Focusing on vocabulary and spoken language
- Committing to help every child learn to read
- Developing mathematical fluency
- Broadening their experiences

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

We are focused on young children's learning and development and meeting their individual needs, whilst providing a happy and healthy learning environment. The comfort and care that our professional staff provide children in our Early Years setting is crucial in making them feeling safe and secure in order for them to explore the world around them. We encourage children to be independent and allow them to feel confident in making their own choices and selecting their own resources to further their learning. Our learning time includes child-initiated and adult-led activities that are planned around our curriculum as well as children's interests and needs which enables them to develop new skills and gain first-hand experiences.

Well-planned and purposeful activities engage and ignite the interests of all children. Baseline assessments, ongoing professional dialogue and regular pupil progress meetings allow teachers to design learning opportunities to support children in acquiring their next steps. Children are encouraged to explore their ideas, make links and ask questions.

### **Core subjects and topic learning**

We plan an interconnected curriculum: our topics have lead subjects to ensure subject specific progress is made, however, we maintain a 'topic' model to allow us to make connections where they are strong, relevant and helpful to learning.

We name and visit individual subjects often within topics, utilising our curriculum characters, always ensuring we always plan in links with prior learning and opportunities to make

connections. Where a connection with a subject is not obvious, we may teach something discretely.

Progression maps set out the knowledge (substantive and disciplinary) that children will accumulate in each year in each subject. These are supported by subject overviews, which show how knowledge is built upon as children move through the school, and highlight key aspects which need to be taught and connections we must plan for in order to help children to accumulate this knowledge.

### **Mind UP**

The unique evidence-based framework provides knowledge and understanding of neuroscience, mindful awareness, positive psychology and mindful practices to affect positive change within the classroom and beyond. The 15-lesson curriculum includes practices developed to help children improve their focus, manage their emotions and face challenges with resilience, kindness and compassion.

The MindUP lessons are complemented by the 'Brain Break'. This core mindful breathing exercise which takes place three times a day, enables pupils and staff to calm their minds, focus and get ready to learn.

The interactive teaching and learning approaches, complemented by whole-school mindful practices, help create an exciting learning environment within which children can thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

### **Thinking Skills**

We employ a range of methodologies to support children's thinking skills. These strategies strengthen our pedagogy and deepen children's learning.

Thinking Hats are used to signal the different thinking approaches children might draw upon when exploring different aspects of a new idea or construct.

Thinking Maps are used to organise ideas and concepts in different ways using a range of graphical forms.

Habits of Mind (such as 'be ready to make mistakes') signal a style of thinking that can be applied to different learning activities and experiences.

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is referred to by teachers to develop higher level thinking skills. Bloom's terminology is utilised in the planning process and when developing Questions for Learning.

**Questions for Learning (QfLs)** are used to provide starting points for learning. Teachers design meaningful questions which can be answered by the children in response to their learning, and we try to use phrasing which create 'open questions' eg:

- *What makes a good...?*
- *How does...?*
- *What happens when...?*
- *Why does...?*

## **Outdoor Learning and Educational visits**



*Article 24: Children have the right to the best possible health.*

All children have the right to learn from their natural environment. We have designed our school site to make the most of the space available, and children have the chance to learn in the outdoor classroom, the school garden, by the pond, in the amphitheatre and the yoga hut. Through a wide range of outdoor experiences, children develop an understanding and sense of ownership around the effects of their actions upon the environment in which they live, learn and relax. Therefore, they develop a sense of responsibility and care for the world in which they live – a vital step in becoming a global citizen.

We plan a programme of trips and educational visits which is reviewed annually, and capitalises on the opportunities we have to access London as well as the contrasting environments of the home counties. Trips and visits are often used as a launch pad or review tool for topics, and enable them to transfer the bank of skills they develop in the classroom to external environment. This includes residential trips within the UK in Years 5 and 6.

## **Curriculum Leadership**

Faculty leaders have robust overviews of their subject, and guide teachers to design challenging learning which builds on what children already know. This is a process that continues to evolve and we aim to offer teachers ongoing professional development opportunities to develop their subject knowledge, which is invariably essential to high quality learning experiences. Teachers then have a secure foundation to add sparkle, challenge and active learning opportunities to bring key concepts alive. Faculty Leaders have annual action plans to target priorities in their subject, implement change and monitor the impact.

## **Curriculum for all**

Our curriculum is designed to be accessible, where all children can make progress, including those with SEND. Children who have EHCP's have individual learning targets which inform teacher planning and learning journeys which demonstrate children's individual progress. The Elder Room is available for children to access throughout the school day, where learning opportunities are set up in the style of continuous provision. Faculty Leaders are involved in planning opportunities for children to access the curriculum in their subject.

We are continuously striving to diversify our curriculum and ensure that the children are involved in shaping the stories we tell and the perspectives we teach. We regularly review the content of our curriculum, the visitors we have into school and the resources we use with the aim that all children to feel represented. Our Rights Respecting Council Equalities Committee helps us to make decisions about what we include in our curriculum and are part of this review process.

### **Curriculum information**

Termly curriculum newsletters introduce parents to the key concepts being learnt during the term. Half-termly editions of the Heathland Hub focus on curriculum subjects and themes. The school website shares progression maps, the topic overviews and resources to help with learning at home. For more information about the curriculum, please contact the school office and they will put you in touch with the relevant Faculty Leader.

### **Curriculum Policies**

Each subject has a curriculum policy, which can be found on the school website, and explains our aims and philosophy in each subject, our approach to teaching and learning, and how this is resourced across the school. For more information about individual subjects, please see the curriculum section of our school website.