

The curriculum at Unicorn Primary School

What we are aiming to achieve (Intent)

We recognise that our children need to be self-motivated and see the purpose and value in learning; that with us at Unicorn they should have the opportunity and encouragement to develop lifelong learning habits that they will take forward into their next steps in education and beyond.

Unicorn children are encouraged to be problem solvers and to see challenge as positive and even essential through the development of a 'growth mindset'. We aim to give our children the ability to ask questions that will deepen their understanding; we want our children to want to take their learning further. We want them to gain the skills to decipher fact from 'fiction' or opinion, and the courage to question and challenge when they believe change is needed.

Our Unicorn curriculum is built on the ambitious foundations of the National Curriculum (2014) and the Early Years' Foundation Stage framework (2021). It is designed to enable children to draw from and build on prior knowledge and learning. We have sought to provide learning experiences which broaden and deepen children's understanding of individual subjects. We want Unicorn children to know what it means to study history and be a historian; we want them to recognise that when they use particular skills that they learn in science they are being scientific or 'being a scientist'. Alongside this, we want our children to know that connections can be made between subjects and the skills learned and that one may enhance their learning in another, for example, using their IT skills to create pieces of work/ presentations/ recordings in other subjects.

The love we have for, and the value we place on, books and reading is evident as soon as you enter our school. Our classrooms and shared learning areas are designed to make reading for pleasure and purpose an integral part of the school day. Children are encouraged to recognise the part reading can play, not only in enabling them to access subjects and the wider curriculum in school, but also the power well developed reading skills have to enhance their engagement in hobbies and future careers beyond the school gates.

One of the most unique elements of Unicorn Primary School is our setting. The legacy of the prior land use means that we are surrounded by woodlands and a stream as well as our residential neighbours. We make the best use of this by threading opportunities for learning outside the classroom throughout our curriculum. This goes alongside the use of expert visitors and educational visits, within the local and wider area, to enhance and add value to our children's learning.

We value and celebrate the diversity of our school, within our local community and beyond. We aim to create an inclusive environment where all children feel valued, recognised and represented, and our curriculum has an essential role to play in this. Curriculum content is considered carefully so that historical and current events studied are portrayed accurately and allow children the opportunity to question and reflect on

the actions of others appropriately. Our children learn to value differences and to recognise the contributions of different cultures and religions to our world, both locally and globally. Books shared and achievements celebrated will be intentionally representative and inclusive in terms of race, gender, faith and disability - both learning and physical.

How we achieve our aims (Implementation)

Our subject leaders have used their expertise to map the progression of knowledge, skills and vocabulary in their subjects through sequences of learning that link and build continuously through the school years. They make sure that prior learning in subjects is clearly identified, so that teachers can draw on this and help children to make connections between new knowledge and what they have learnt before. Beginning new units of learning with an exciting hook and finishing with specific end point tasks help children to see the bigger picture of what they have learned and also the development of their knowledge and skills.

Through the use of up to date research and shared professional development opportunities, all our staff, teachers and teaching assistants have an understanding of ‘metacognition’ and the science of learning.

Use of careful modelling, for example, an ‘I do, we do, you do’ approach to introducing new concepts in mathematics and creating pieces of shared writing with the class before expecting children to work independently, helps our children to feel confident about what they need to do in order to be successful. Scaffolded support for groups and individuals is provided as appropriate but removed when no longer needed.

Verbal feedback from the adults and the use of peer and self-assessment during lessons help children to recognise what they are doing well and what they need to do in order to improve. It also means that teachers are able to identify gaps in understanding and adapt lesson and activities to support this, or alternatively recognise when children can be challenged to take their learning broader and deeper.

We use strategies such as retrieval practice, low stakes quizzing, knowledge mapping and games to give children regular opportunities to recall and embed skills and knowledge.

Planning of individual subjects is supported, but never restricted, by the use of a number of published schemes. These include White Rose Mathematics, EdShed for spelling and grammar, the Kent scheme for Science, Language Angels for French and SCARF for PSHE. The only exception to this is our phonics scheme – Bug Club Phonics – as schools are expected to follow their chosen (DfE accredited) phonics scheme systematically and with fidelity.

As stated, learning beyond the classroom supports and enhances our curriculum. For example, the use of maps and compasses to follow our orienteering course and the study of the stream, habitats and ecosystems in the nature reserve allows ‘real world’ practice of Science and Geography skills and brings the knowledge alive.

Many of our children have interests, talents and strengths in particular areas of the curriculum such as art, languages, music and sport. The range of extra-curricular activities available before, during and at the end of the school day offer children the opportunity to take these further or indeed try something new. Teachers will often recommend or suggest an activity to a parent having observed their child's interest or talent during lessons.

What are the outcomes of our work and how do we know (Impact)

Subject leaders and senior leaders at Unicorn build a picture of teaching, learning and children's outcomes in a number of ways. They visit lessons and view children's books as a matter of course, but they also carry out regular 'pupil voice' activities. This involves talking with small groups of children at a time and always provides a wealth of information about what the children enjoy, what they know and what they remember about their learning in different subjects and other aspects of the curriculum. It is also an opportunity to find out from the children what they think would help make their learning experience 'even better'.

Regular 'pupil progress' meetings throughout the year between teachers and senior leaders draw on the vast depth of knowledge our teachers have about their pupils and the evidence gained through formative and summative assessments. This enables us to identify gaps in learning and provide additional support to pupils where needed. All groups of pupils are monitored, including SEND and disadvantaged pupils, to ensure that our most vulnerable pupils make good progress and any directed additional funding is being used appropriately and effectively.

In statutory DfE assessments - EYFS, the Phonics check Year One, and End of Key Stage One and Two SATs - Unicorn pupils consistently achieve above the national average. This means that our pupils are ready for the next stage of their learning. We are confident that our Year Six pupils move on to secondary school ready for the social experiences and academic challenge ahead.