

The Firs Lower School

Curriculum Policy Statement



Philosophy and Aims

We believe that the lower school years are amongst the most important in a child's life. Children at the age of 4+ are already individuals in their own right. They are interested in the world around them and are already starting to make some sense of it, having acquired various degrees of learning through the home and the community. The curriculum in the school is planned to promote the continued development of each individual pupil by providing a variety of experiences (intellectually, socially, physically, emotionally, aesthetically and spiritually) suited to the age and developmental needs of the child. The curriculum will therefore be broad, balanced relevant to the pupils' own experience and matched to his/her abilities and aptitudes thus ensuring each child achieves his/her full potential.

The school also recognises that success relies on good co-operation between home and school, and we aim to build sound relationships and partnerships where school, parents and the child all have an important role to play in the education of the child.

Ethos

The whole school environment will be stimulating, welcoming, happy and secure and one in which children develop self discipline and show respect for others and property. The children are expected to take a pride in all that they do as part of developing a 'Growth Mindset' (see Teaching and Learning and Behaviour Policies). In promoting an awareness of self and sensitivity to others, positive attitudes of courtesy, consideration and care are developed as part of the core values of the school 'CREATE':

Caring and welcoming for everyone

Responsibility to play our part in the team

Engaging and communicating positively with the whole community

Aspire to persevere and do our best

Teaching that is fun and helps us learn.

Every child taking pride in their learning all their life

In addition a range of values are developed in turn, each month which serve to enrich the curriculum offered to children at The Firs. The school is part of a wider community and is committed to developing pupils' awareness of their own and other's needs.

Curriculum structure

The curriculum for all pupils begins with the Foundation Stage for children in the early years. From Year 1 onwards children follow the National Curriculum, which consists of the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science and the foundation subjects of Computing, History, Geography, Design Technology, Art, Music, Physical Education, PSHCE (Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education) and French at KS2. Religious Education is organised according to the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus.

The work is planned to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which also fulfils the requirements of the National curriculum. A high priority is given to English and Maths. All subjects are taught as distinct areas of learning, with the key concepts, knowledge and skills of each particular subject area being developed through termly or half

termly blocks of study. (Where appropriate, links are drawn between different subject areas.)

Organisation and teaching methods

Children are admitted into the Reception class (Year R) in the September after their fourth birthday. Classes in the main school (years 1 – 4) are grouped into two parallel classes in each year group throughout the school.

Children are taught as a whole class in many areas, with differentiated work being given to match the children's individual needs. At other times children are taught individually, or in groups / sets (See RWI below) as and when appropriate. Special attention is paid to children with SEND and other more vulnerable groups such as Looked After Children and other children in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

Differentiation is used appropriately, so that what is taught and how it is taught is matched to and develops pupils' abilities and aptitudes. Varying teaching approaches will be used, which offer and encourage a variety of relevant opportunities, matched to the differing learning styles of the children, including an emphasis on challenging all children, including the more able, to do their best.

EYFS

The EYFS Framework is used as a basis for our own curriculum. The curriculum is organised into seven areas of learning:

- Communication and Language Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Mathematical Development
- Literacy
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

At the Firs Lower School we recognise that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and that all the areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected and therefore depend upon each other to support a rounded approach to the development of the child. As such we aim to deliver opportunities that develop a number of competencies, skills and concepts across several areas of learning, through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. (See the 'Early Years Policy'. In addition, see the 'Teaching and Learning' policy which highlights the features of effective teaching and learning at The Firs.

National Curriculum Subjects

1) English

The development of English is fundamental in all areas of the curriculum and therefore is given high priority in this school. All language modes: speaking and listening, reading, writing, including spelling and handwriting are interdependent and of great importance, although the school is unashamedly passionate about the use of the Read Write Inc. scheme, to develop children's reading.

Speaking and listening

Speaking and listening skills are taught specifically in English sessions and given prominence and time in all other lessons through for example, the use of Talk Partners. It is valued and taught as the foundation skill for communication and for literacy.

Reading

We aim to teach children to become fluent independent readers and to develop a love of literature and books.

The school is a Read Write Inc. school and as such, we have made a commitment to aim for excellence in our pursuit of the vision that all our children should be fluent readers, who can use their skills to develop their learning in all areas of the curriculum and who can experience the joy and enrichment that reading brings to our lives.

The Read Write Inc. scheme is used from YR to teach phonics, early reading skills and writing skills, with the aim being, that the majority of pupils complete the programme early in Y2.

Through a system of regular individual assessments (every 6-8 weeks), children are allocated to a group which focuses accurately on their learning needs. The pace at which sessions are delivered, coupled with the fact that any child not making the necessary progress is given 1 to 1 support, ensures that children make rapid progress.

Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in the process of reading with their children and books are regularly taken home to be enjoyed together.

Writing

We aim to make children competent, confident writers to enable them to use the written word fluently and flexibly. Children's progress will be tracked carefully to ensure that they are progressing well and that high standards are being maintained. Teachers will ensure that children are well aware of how to be successful in lessons and how to assess their work and the work of their peers against the success criteria. The Curriculum will be designed to provide children with an appropriate range of opportunities to write meaningfully in a range of genres. Feedback will be used to guide children in how to develop their writing, creating opportunities for pupils to develop their learning in response.

Spelling

The teaching of spelling is an integrated part of the RWI scheme for children on the programme in KS1. To support their learning, children will take home sounds sheets reflecting the sound or sounds they have learned and lists of words for RWI books they are reading.

The spelling programme for children in Y2, Y3 and Y4, who have completed the RWI scheme will cover all aspects of the National Curriculum and will be designed to ensure that spelling work is useful in improving the children's spelling in their day to day writing work.

Handwriting

Initial letter formation teaching occurs in YR in line with the RWI scheme. Handwriting work in Y1 continues to support this. Formal handwriting lessons are given to pupils as they leave the programme in Y2 and on into KS2. The children are taught a

cursive style to ensure all children are joining and to improve presentation. (See handwriting guide Appendix A)

2) Maths

We aim to provide opportunities for all children to experience and acquire the key mathematical concepts, skills and language, in a stimulating, challenging and supportive atmosphere. The introduction of mathematics in the early years is initially developed through practical activity, stories, songs, games and imaginative play. Throughout the school children are encouraged to use visual images and practical apparatus, to support their working and to help to cement key concepts in their mind.

As they progress through the school, children follow a structured programme designed to increase children's understanding of the number system and their confidence when performing mental and written calculations. A variety of teaching strategies and approaches are employed, including the traditional teaching of tables and the setting of homework.

In mathematics lessons, children learn how to conjecture, making logical deductions from what they know that they can then go on to test. They solve problems and undertake investigations, with a particular emphasis on children deciding for themselves how to organise their working and how to record their responses. A great emphasis is also placed on encouraging children to discuss their work, draw conclusions and explain their methods of working, both to their talk partner and sometimes to the class as a whole.

3) Science

In science lessons, opportunities are provided for children to develop skills and gain an understanding of scientific concepts through first hand experiences. We aim to do this in an environment that encourages positive attitudes of curiosity, perseverance, open-mindedness, critical reflection and co-operation. Our programme of study includes:

Year 1	Plants, Animals including humans, Everyday materials and Seasonal changes
Year 2	Living things and their habitats, Plants, Animals including humans and Uses of everyday materials
Year 3	Plants, Animals including humans, Rocks, Light and Forces & magnets
Year 4	Living things and their habitats, Animals including humans, States of matter, Sound and Electricity

4) Computing

We believe that all children are entitled to be prepared for a technological society and it is our aim that they should acquire the skills and attitudes that will help them to use technology confidently and successfully. The school has a computer suite enabling classes to partake in a whole class Computing lesson each week. Computers and a range of equipment such as Interactive whiteboards and projectors are also used in the classrooms to enrich the learning in other areas of the curriculum. Children are introduced to computers in the reception class and knowledge and skills are built upon as the child progresses through the school. Children are given the experience of using the internet, email and other multimedia sources.

In Computing sessions children learn to create algorithms of increasing complexity, use technology to create and organise data in different ways and about how the internet works. Pupils will also learn how to use modern technology safely and respectfully.

5) History

In history children study people, events and developments in the past and the ways in which these have helped shape the present. Interest in and curiosity about the past is taught through story-telling, drama, themed days, 'living history' demonstrations by visitors to the school, individual research and the examination of a range of historical sources including pictures, written and oral evidence, buildings and artefacts.

Visits to museums or other places of historical interest are made where appropriate. Key Stage 2 follow topics on local history (World War II) and the Invaders (Celts, Romans, Anglo Saxons and Vikings). Key Stage 1 history teaching centres on the lives of people in the past, including their homes, toys and holidays.

6) Geography

In our teaching of geography we aim to give pupils an interest in and curiosity about people and places. The children are given opportunities to visit and reflect on the locality of Ampthill, including the school grounds, Station Road, Ampthill town centre and Coopers Hill. The pupils then contrast these experiences with different places they study in the wider world such as '.....' in Y2, 'France' In Year 3 and 'Brazil' in Year 4. During their course of study, children have the opportunity to support their learning through using a variety of geographical evidence e.g., photographs, maps, pictures, videos and ICT material.

7) Design Technology

Children are given opportunities to construct using a range of skills and a variety of materials. The range of skills includes modelling, fastening materials together using a variety of mechanisms, food technology, assembling and disassembling models and exploring simple mechanisms such as joints, levers and gears. The varieties of materials include clay, textiles, foodstuffs, sheet materials, wood and the use of constructions kits. The children are always encouraged to create designs and plan their work and to evaluate and modify it as they progress, identifying strengths and weaknesses, thus adjusting their work accordingly.

8) Music

Musical appreciation is extended by the children being taught about rhythm, pitch and the basic understanding of musical notation. Children are taught to listen and appraise the works of others, to sing, to play simple percussion instruments and to compose music themselves. The 'Charanga' scheme is used as the main source of the music curriculum. The school has a variety of instruments from various cultures, CDs, tapes, videos and live professional performances which are used to deliver the planned music curriculum.

Extra-curricular opportunities are also an important part of the provision for music made by the school. Children in Year 2, 3 and 4 are given the opportunity to participate in the school choir. Some children receive individual tuition in the violin, cello, piano, flute, guitar and some brass instruments from the Country peripatetic staff. Children are encouraged to play their instruments in assembly and to enhance the end of term class productions. Children also perform within the local community and a Musical Concert evenings is held in school once a year to provide the opportunity for children to experience performing to a large audience.

9) Physical Education

All children have an opportunity for PE twice each week through gymnastics, games, athletics or dance/movement lessons. In dance the children have the opportunity to

experience traditional English country-dance, imaginative dance and dance from different ages and cultures.

Children participate in a variety of individual and group based activities and also in competitive games. By providing activities to develop control, co-ordination and mobility, we aim to assist the children to develop an understanding, and awareness of their own capabilities and mastery of their body movements. Health and fitness are promoted by activities that extend the children physically and we hope to lay the foundations for the enjoyment of a variety of sporting activities throughout life.

10) Art and design

Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of skills and techniques involving the use of a variety of materials, with opportunities to create work in both two and three dimensional forms. Children are also presented with opportunities to study, recognise and appreciate the work of past and present artists from a variety of cultures. We aim to encourage high standards and value the efforts of every child through careful displays of their work.

11) Modern Foreign language - French

As Amptill is twinned with a French town (Nissan-lez-Enserune), French is the MFL we focus on at The Firs. During KS1 there may be an informal introduction to foreign languages through answering the register in different languages and through songs and games etc. French is formally taught in KS2 through actions, songs, activities and role-play, where many of the following topics are covered: Introductions (hello), numbers, family, pets, parts of the body, animals, months of the year, clothing and hobbies etc.

12) Religious Education

The aim of RE is to contribute to the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of the pupils as individuals and members of society. The children are taught about the beliefs and religious practices of the principal religions represented in Great Britain. The teaching of RE is based on the County's recommended study units:

Year 1	Diwali, Hanukkah and Christmas Birth & Marriage Stories / Special People in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism
Year 2	Families and communities/Feelings and Relationships/Christmas Story Special Books/Key Stories in the Bible/Torah/Qur'an New Life/Baptism and Creation Stories from around the world.
Year 3	How should we live and who can inspire us? How and why does a Christian follow Jesus? What does it mean to be a Jew?
Year 4	Islam Christianity Hinduism

13) Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE)

Through a structured programme in PSHCE pupils develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident, healthy, independent lives and to become informed, active and responsible citizens. (Drugs education is taught as part of the PSHCE programme.) We also believe that children's every day experiences at school greatly contribute to their personal, social and emotional development. Children are encouraged from an early age to be responsible for themselves and to see the need for truthfulness, politeness and considerations for others. Children learn about the value the school is focusing on each month in PSHCE, to support work in

assembly on developing the theme. Approaches to behaviour management in the school are based on thinking of others and their needs, respect for property, courtesy and self control. All these elements are important in shaping children's development in a positive way and in so doing, help to create a friendly and happy environment where children can enjoy learning.

Collective Worship

The daily act of worship provides an opportunity for children to develop spiritual awareness and understanding whilst at the same time provides children with a time for reflection. The act of collective worship is 'mainly of a broadly Christian character', but where respect and tolerance of the beliefs of others are shown. It also creates a sense of school identity and belonging through the sharing of values and experiences, and the celebration of achievement.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from Collective Worship by putting their request in writing to the Head teacher.

Community Links

The school maintains close links with the local play groups, the local (FARM) schools, Russell Lower and Maulden Lower and also Alameda Middle school (with whom we share the school site). The head teachers meet regularly, as do the curriculum leaders. We have regular visits from local church leaders, who join us for assemblies. The school supports the local Day Centre for the elderly and the Leonard Cheshire home for the disabled with Harvest Festival produce. The school also joins in various local events such as visits by our Choir, The Ampthill Christmas Tree Festival, The annual Ampthill Remembrance event and the Ampthill carnival. We see the school as a very important part of Ampthill town life and encourage the children to appreciate this and contribute as fully as possible to their community.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

All children have individual needs and these will vary from subject to subject. They are addressed by the class teacher as a normal part of the lesson, through differentiation of the delivery of the curriculum (providing work at a suitable level for the child). However it is recognised that at any time, some children will experience a particular learning difficulty that can be of short or long term duration. Those children who are identified as having Special Educational Needs and disabilities (at either end of the spectrum) will require additional help. The school aims to identify as early as possible those children and take appropriate action. The school's Special Needs Co-ordinator, maintains a register of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and works closely with the class teachers and various outside agencies. Those children with SENDs are supported by the provision made in each year group (recorded on the 'Provision Map' for that year group. Where there needs are greater, provision to meet their needs is recorded on an individual 'MAP' (My Action Plan). In some cases children will need a greater level of support. If this is the case, the School may (in consultation with parents) apply for the pupil to be assessed to decide whether they meet the criteria for an 'Education, Health and Care Plan'. The school has access to the Local Education Authority's Psychological Service, Health and Welfare agencies etc who are all able to give advice and support. We aim to involve and consult regularly with the parents of children with SEND at all stages and to engage their support. Parent's permission is always sought before outside agencies are involved or before children are included on the SEND register and they are kept fully informed of the outcomes.

Assessment, recording and reporting

We believe that assessment and monitoring is essential to the promotion of effective teaching and learning and should take place on a continuous basis. It should be a fair

and open process, which involves, informs, supports and motivates pupils. We assess our children's progress by continuous observation, assessing children's work on a regular basis and by testing at various stages as the children progress through the school. During their time in Reception, children's progress is assessed using the Foundation Stage Profile. National tests are carried out for phonics in Year 1 and in Year 2.

Records of children's achievements are maintained using the 'G2' online database. Records are updated regularly and used to inform teacher's planning to ensure full coverage and progression through the planned Curriculum, The information gained is also passed on to the Middle school on transfer to year 5. Parents are regularly informed about their child's progress informally and more formally through parent's consultation evenings held in the spring term. A brief summary report is issued early in the spring term, reflecting on progress at the end of the autumn. A formal report is also written at the end of the academic year. Individual targets are set for all children and these are regularly reviewed at 'Target Monitoring Meetings' with additional support being given to any pupils who are not making appropriate progress.

Sex Education

There is no formal sex education policy but pupil's questions in this area are answered as sensitively as possible.

Equal Opportunities

The school promotes equal access to all pupils in the curriculum and the extra curricular areas and will not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.