

The Curriculum at Downs Infant School

At Downs Infants we believe that education is about developing the whole child. It should enable children to be able to make the very best of their lives; having choice and opportunity in their social and economic situation, contributing to society, and developing a sense of self-worth. A good education should be rich in knowledge and in opportunities to apply that knowledge. Children's education should include experiences of our cultural, artistic, sporting and social heritage, and encourage them to contribute to this.

We believe this is achieved by:

- Starting from where the children are: building on their knowledge and interests to challenge them and take them somewhere new.
- Adopting a theme-based approach so that children see links between areas of study, and have opportunities to apply what they learn in a variety of contexts.
- Ensuring progression through the EYFS and Key Stage 1, making clear and explicit links with previous learning at all stages.
- Planning opportunities for children to become fluent in the skills and knowledge that will enable them to make good progress throughout their infant education and beyond.
- Considering the kinds of experiences children need to have both to develop their knowledge, and to provide developmentally appropriate challenges.
- Being flexible with the organisation of learning so that passions can be nurtured and depth of learning provided for.
- Working from clear objectives when we plan learning sessions and communicating clearly to the children what success looks like.

How learning is organised at Downs Infants

In Reception we give children time to explore ideas and interests through play and active involvement with the reception environment. We believe that learning for young children should be a natural, rewarding and enjoyable experience. We know that children learn in different ways and at different rates, and within this children are challenged and encouraged to achieve their best.

The EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) is based upon the promotion of four guiding principles:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments
- Learning and development

Working to these principles is central to the work of the Reception classes at Downs Infant School and as such fully embedded in our work.

We follow themes that last roughly a half term. However, the content and length of the topic may be amended at times to reflect changing needs and circumstances, to enable flexibility in capitalising upon the educational potential of unforeseen special events and 'one offs'. These have been carefully chosen and to allow us to cover the EYFS curriculum. We actively encourage parental involvement and that of the wider community wherever relevant and possible.

Each class in Reception has a class teacher and main class teaching assistant. We operate a free flow approach which includes all four classrooms, our 'ocean' where children have a large indoor space for messy play and self-initiated snack (amongst other things). We have several outdoor areas

including our 'beach' area and our 'garden' where children can experience outdoor learning each and every day despite the weather! In this way children can access a range of self-directed challenges alongside structured adult led learning experiences. Learning spaces are clearly defined and resources are easily accessible so that children can develop as independent learners.

In Key Stage 1 we have over-arching themes which run over 'about' a term. This is because term lengths vary, as does what children know and the way in which they learn. They are mapped out on a school *curriculum grid*. Each theme has been carefully chosen to allow us to cover aspects of the National Curriculum. Opportunities are also planned for topics to be revisited so that children can develop a deeper understanding of important skills and ideas, and apply things previously learned. Opportunities for practice and consolidation are also provided. Progression is built into these plans, and a whole school theme at the end of the Summer Term allows staff to plan collaboratively across year groups to ensure a good understanding of what progression looks like for each cohort of children. This curriculum grid will be published on the website.

Termly *theme maps* outline the objectives to be covered in each subject area. They show links between subjects as well as where skills need to be taught and practiced to ensure fluency. These are shared with parents during the year.

Within the school day provision is also made for assemblies which meet the requirements for collective worship and which allow us to explore our values, learning skills and aspects of citizenship. We use lunch and playtimes to further develop skills and attributes we value.

At present we are revising our curriculum model and planning to ensure it is in line with these beliefs. If you wish to discuss this please make an appointment with your child's Year Group Leader or the Headteacher.