

The National Curriculum

The National Curriculum is a blueprint used by schools to ensure that teaching standards are universally consistent. Schools are free to plan how the National Curriculum fits with their particular strengths and introduce other activities that extend the learning experience for their pupils. A revised version of the National Curriculum was introduced from September 2014. Our school has been busy preparing for this significant change, revising its school based schemes of work in the light of this. The National Curriculum:

- Sets out the most important knowledge and skills that every child has a right to learn
- Is a flexible framework given to teachers by Government, so that all school children are taught in a way that is balanced and manageable, but stretching enough to challenge them and meet their diverse needs.
- Gives standards that measure how well children are doing in each subject so teachers can monitor achievement and plan to help them do even better.

It also defines your child's progress in broad Key Stages. Schools are free to organise teaching within this time as they think best. They will ultimately create their own plans, term by term and year by year.

Key Stages and National Curriculum levels

At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 your child will take national tests and tasks, (popularly called 'SATs'). At the end of Key Stage 4, they will sit national examinations, often GCSEs.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the BBC have developed a website called, '[Digger and the gang](#)', which is based on the National Curriculum for primary school children

National Curriculum Subjects

The National Curriculum, taught to all pupils in state or maintained schools, is made up of blocks of years, known as key stages:

- Year 1 and Year 2 of primary school are known as Key Stage 1
- Years 3 to 6 of primary school are known as Key Stage 2
- Compulsory National Curriculum subjects are the same for Key Stages 1 and 2:
 - English
 - Maths
 - Science
 - Design and technology

- Computing
 - History
 - Geography
 - Art and design
 - Music
 - Physical education
- Schools also have to teach religious education, though parents have the right to withdraw children for all or part of the religious education curriculum. In addition, schools are advised to teach personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, together with at least one modern foreign language.

English

The teaching of English is based on the revised English programme of study, and children will be taught a 'English' lesson most days of the school year.

This covers core teaching and learning in:

- Spoken language
- Reading - including word reading (sight word and decoding skills) and comprehension
- Writing - including transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)

The aims of English in the national curriculum include ensuring that all children:

- read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information

Children begin their reading in school through building up their **phonics**, the core building blocks of reading. We use '**Letters and Sounds**' as the main programme to guide early reading development. The children then learn to read progressively through our colour coded reading scheme, using a wide variety of books from different schemes such as Oxford Reading Tree, Rigby Star and others. Children do not race through these books but build their confidence and ability through repetition and consolidation of the many words they are adding to their core vocabulary.

We encourage parents to **read regularly** with their children at home, as this skill is at the heart of a child's abilities in so much of the rest of their learning. We support this in school through a progressive range of colour coded reading books; children develop reading skills through Group Reading sessions in school and one-to-one reading with family members, supported by supportive skills cards at home. Children should always have access to all sorts of reading materials both at home and at school. Listening to your child read, reading to them and sharing a love of reading with them are all very important.

We also encourage parents to help children with their **writing development**, from early mark making through early letter formation and the development of hand writing skills, and then with the practising of writing in different styles.

In English sessions in school, children are able to work at their own level and pace, and they progress well

- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.

Mathematics

- Our teaching of mathematics is based on the mathematics programme of study in the revised National Curriculum.

The core aims of mathematics are to ensure that children:

- become fluent in the fundamentals of mathematics, including through varied and frequent practice with increasingly complex problems over time, so that children develop conceptual understanding and the ability to recall and apply knowledge rapidly and accurately
- reason mathematically by following a line of enquiry, conjecturing relationships and generalisations, and developing an argument, justification or proof using mathematical language
- can solve problems by applying their mathematics to a variety of routine and non-routine problems with increasing sophistication, including breaking down problems into a series of simpler steps and persevering in seeking solutions.
- The National Curriculum Programme of study includes expectations for each year group from Year 1 through to Year 6 as average expectations for the majority of children in that year group.

Parents should be aware that many aspects of mathematics are taught in a variety of different ways, some of which will be significantly different to their own experience at school. Our aim is to encourage children to learn a variety of methods to calculate, so they can apply different methods in different circumstances. We endeavour to help parents also understand some of these

different methods too, particularly for understanding and supporting home learning. We encourage all parents to help their children learn important number bonds (up to 19, then up to 20, then up to 100), moving on to knowing their multiplication tables (x2, x5 and x10 in Year 2; x3, x4 and x8 in Year 3; all tables up to x12 in Year 4) and more advanced calculation skills, as directed by class teachers.

One core element in mathematics is the teaching of number, which includes substantial areas of place value, addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, fractions (including decimals from Year 4 and percentages from Year 5), and ratio & proportion and algebra (in Year 6)

Other areas of mathematics include measurement, geometry (properties of shape, and position and direction) and statistics.

Religious Education

Worship and Church Links are an important part of life at our school. Children visit the local church of St. Peter's several times a year. The children take a lead role at church services, reading lessons and prayers, showing work and playing instruments and singing. Visiting Clergy from the church, and wider community, regularly join us in school to lead our worship or for special occasions.

We follow the East Sussex Religious Educational Curriculum. Our Religious Education curriculum is much broader in nature, with themes such as Beliefs and Questions, Symbols, Inspirational People, Religion, Family and Community, Sacred Places. These themes touch many cultures and religions and raise important issues of similarities and differences between a range of cultures and beliefs. These themes run through all year groups and are re-visited at different levels throughout a child's time with us.

As a church school, we place a very high value on the Christian foundation of our school and the Christian ethos we create within our school. One particular aspect of this is our daily act of Collective Worship, and our children enjoy learning from the rich Christian Values taught during these times together.

Science

Science is the National Curriculum has the following aims, for children to:

- develop scientific knowledge and conceptual understanding through the specific disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics (though not necessarily understanding these specific terms initially)
- develop understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science through different types of science enquiries that help them to answer scientific questions about the world around them

- are equipped with the scientific knowledge required to understand the uses and implications of science, today and for the future
- The science curriculum is divided into these two key areas:
 1. Scientific enquiry or working scientifically - understanding how to explore and investigate all aspects of science; understanding the nature, processes and methods of science (this strand of science runs across all other specific strands)
 2. Scientific knowledge and conceptual understanding on a variety of scientific themes (see Curriculum Maps)

Our youngest children learn about Science first hand; through play activities inside and outside the classroom. They learn to look out for similarities and differences and patterns and change in nature. They learn to appreciate the natural world and develop an understanding of life cycles. This is then built on through the rest of the school, as we seek to keep children naturally inquisitive and excited about the world around them, as they try to make sense of things and understanding scientific processes and principles.

Computing

Computing has links with virtually all other areas of learning, but also has some defined strands in its own right too. It used to be called Information and Communications Technology (ICT) but is now called computing, to reflect the emphasis on computation, how digital systems work and how to put this knowledge to use through programming - then how to use and apply the skills across all areas of learning.

The key aims are to ensure that children:

- can understand and apply fundamental principles and concepts of computer science, including abstraction, logic, algorithms and data representation
- can analyse problems in computational terms, and have repeated practical experience of writing computer programs in order to solve such problems
- The use of computers has been a key part of recent educational development, and remains at the heart of twenty-first century education, and we are eager to ensure that our use of computers in school puts our children in a strong position for their future in a rapidly changing technology world.
- can evaluate and apply information technology, including new or unfamiliar technologies, analytically to solve problems
- are responsible, competent, confident and creative users of information and communication technologies.

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Design and Technology

Design and technology is an inspiring, rigorous and practical subject with the following aims - to ensure children:

- develop the creative, technical and practical expertise needed to perform everyday tasks confidently, and to participate successfully in an increasingly technological world;
- build and apply a repertoire of knowledge, understanding and skills in order to design and make high quality prototypes and products for a wide range of users
- critique, evaluate and test their ideas and products and the work of others
- understand and apply the principles of nutrition and learn how to cook
- Younger children develop their DT skills through child-initiated activities of cutting, gluing, joining and creating. They are taught to review their own work and consider ways to overcome problems they have met along the way.

Older children will work in groups, or individually, on careful development of their design ideas. They seek to apply these in a range of challenging tasks using a range of materials and processes. A significant time is given to the evaluation of what they create so that the quality of their work can be improved each subsequent time.

Cooking and nutrition is a newer aspect of the curriculum, where children need to use basic principles of nutrition in a healthy and varied diet, and gain a deeper understanding of where food comes from, including an understanding of seasonality. They also need to learn basic cooking skills, with predominantly savoury dishes, using a variety of techniques.

This area of the curriculum involves children in looking at a variety of objects and themes, being creative in coming up with their own designs, making things based on their design and evaluating their success along the way. These projects can lead children in making all kinds of wonderful things!

The core process is to design, make and evaluate while learning key skills and technical knowledge.

Design Technology (DT) projects are often linked to class topics and learning is often 'blocked' so that a particular project may be developed over several consecutive days.

History

In history we aim to give children an awareness of the past and how it was different from the present, an understanding of the sequence of historical events and an ability to explore some of the ways in which historians find out about the past.

The key aims for history are to ensure children:

- know and understand the history of the British Isles, in a coherent and chronological narrative, including how people's lives have shaped the nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world, including ancient civilisations, expansion and dissolution of empires, characteristic features of past non-European societies and achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and use a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'
- Initially children learn about general historical themes including changes in living memory, everyday lives of people, famous men and women, change and developments over time, reasons for events, and different interpretations of history.

In Key Stage 2 we teach specific historical periods at times, including:

- changes in Britain from Stone Age to Iron Age
- the Roman Empire and its impact on Britain
- Britain's settlement by others (including Vikings, Anglo-Saxons and Scots),
- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity and difference, significance - use these to make connections, analyse trends, frame historical questions
- understand methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence can be used to make historical claims and make contrasting arguments
- gain historical perspectives by placing their historical knowledge into different context
- Aspects of themes in British history since 1066 (such as features of Victorian Britain), Ancient Greece and Ancient Egypt (or other early civilisation), and a non-European society that contrasts with British history
- an aspect of our local history is also investigated.

Geography

In the Geography curriculum, children learn a wide range of geographical skills to help them with their studies of people and places, and geographical processes. They explore a variety of places in the UK, Europe and the wider world. We encourage children to

investigate in geography, developing a range of skills including asking questions, making descriptions, using maps, pictures and other information sources, fieldwork and discussing issues. The children investigate their own locality, another area in the United Kingdom, and another locality in a developing country. We also investigate rivers, weather and climate, mountain environments, and environmental changes and conservation.

The key aims are to ensure children:

- interpret a range of sources of geographical information, including diagrams, globes, aerial photographs and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
- communicate geographical information in a variety of ways, including through maps, numerical and quantitative skills and writing at length.
- The physical geography includes: basic features of places that make them distinct and known, climate zones, biomes and vegetation regions, rivers and mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes, and the water cycle.
- In human geography includes different types of location and their key features, different types of settlement and land use, economic activity and trade, and the distribution and use of our earth's natural resources globally. The children explore different environments, and also aspects of environmental change and sustainability.
- develop knowledge of the location of globally significant places, including their physical and human characteristics, and how these provide a geographical context for understanding the actions of processes
- understand the processes that give rise to key physical and human geographical features of the world, how these are interdependent and how they bring about spatial variation and change over time
- are competent in geographical skills needed to:
 - collect and analyse and communicate with a range of data gathered through fieldwork that deepen their understanding of geographical processes

Different aspects of history are taught in varying degrees of detail, and many are included within broader themes, not necessarily being taught as discrete history units

Art and Design

Children of all ages enjoy working in a variety of media, including paint, pastels and chalks, collage, clay, paper and paste construction, printing. Children learn to produce work in both 2D and 3D, and in a variety of sizes. Art work is often, but not always, linked to the class topic.

The main aims of the programme of study for art and design are to ensure that children:

- produce creative work, exploring their ideas and recording their experiences;
- become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques;
- evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design;
- It is our aim that the children should have the opportunity to work with a variety of media and be able to develop the techniques and skills needed for each. We have the facilities for drawing, painting, collage, pottery, cookery, needlework and model making. Children are taught to use tools safely and responsibly.

In art lessons, children are encouraged to explore different materials, styles and ideas, investigate different purposes and uses of materials, and to observe, evaluate and appreciate their own and others' art work including the work of famous artists. In Key Stage 2 children develop the use of a sketch book to record their ideas

- know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms

Music

Firle has a strong musical tradition. Music and singing form a regular part of school for every child, and our collective worship sees the expression of high quality singing on a regular basis. They continue to develop their musical skills throughout their school life. In Years 3 and 4 additional music sessions are provided through the East Sussex Music Service, enabling all children to having up to six term's specialist music tuition.

Music is taught as part of the National Curriculum in normal lesson time for all children, and we are well resourced in this area. The main aims of the music curriculum are to ensure children:

- perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians
- learn to sing and to use their voices to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, use technology appropriately and have the opportunity to progress to the next level of musical excellence
- understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations.
- Children are taught skills via four major musical strands :-
 1. Performing Skills - controlling sounds through singing and playing

2. Composing Skills - creating and developing musical ideas
3. Appraising Skills - responding and reviewing
4. Listening Skills - listening to a variety of music and applying knowledge and understanding

As well as our high quality general curriculum music, there is a wide range of other musical activities on offer:

The school has a choir for those who enjoy singing, and the choir will often sing at a number of school events through the school year. There are further opportunities for children to learn a variety of other instruments: violin, flute etc with visiting independent teachers. These teachers are paid separately by parents as the lessons do not form part of the normal school curriculum. The lessons may take place during or out of school hours.

Physical Education and Sport

Physical Education is an important part of the curriculum at Firle. The Physical Education curriculum engages children in a variety of physical activities for around 2 hours per week, plus additional sporting opportunities as extra curricular clubs.

The key aims of physical education in the national curriculum is to ensure children:

- develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities
- are physically active for sustained periods of time
- engage in competitive sports and activities

lead healthy, active lives.

Foreign Languages

French lesson, with interactive technology

Although children will be given some experience of a range of languages, the main foreign language taught in school is French.

Children will gain some language experience across the whole school, but then all children will be taught French, in their classes, from Year 3 onwards. This is mainly practical communication - conversational French, using modern teaching methods, which the children enjoy.

Personal, Social and Health Education, and Citizenship

Teachers take every opportunity to teach these aspects of education throughout the year, usually through a thematic approach. We include learning in many of these areas

as part of our core curriculum provision, and also deal with additional issue when they are appropriate.

Whenever possible, we include visitors to support our PSHE programme. This includes visits from the School Nurse, the fire service, the police, community responders, etc. to bring the meaning and relevance to life for our children.

A particular emphasis is given to our Sex and Relationships Education which is designed to emphasise not only biological facts and information but also skills, attitudes and insights that all young children need in order to form loving relationships. Our Sex and Relationships Education is placed in an appropriate moral context and will reflect the religious and cultural attitudes of the children concerned.

Please note that our Sex and Relationships Education Policy (or indeed any policy) is available should you wish to read it. Under the Education Act 1993, parents have the right to withdraw their children from any or all parts of our Sex and Relationships Education programme, except those elements which are required as part of science in the National Curriculum.

