



**Dunmow St Mary's
Primary School
Curriculum Policy
(June 2016)**

Curriculum Organisation

Our Reception children follow the Foundation Stage curriculum based on the national Early Learning Goals. We have established an indoor and outdoor learning environment that encourages a positive attitude to learning through rich and stimulating experiences. Our classrooms are fully equipped to achieve this goal, with outdoor covered areas and a landscaped playground set out to encourage experimentation and creativity. Children begin their education in our school within an environment that is vibrant, purposeful, challenging and supportive. We know that this will enable them to develop into confident and successful learners. Children learn about the world through carefully planned play experiences which challenge and encourage every aspect of learning. During the reception year, the elements of the national literacy and numeracy lessons are introduced.

From years 1 to 6 we work within the framework of the National Curriculum which consists of these subjects:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- Computing
- Design and Technology (D&T)
- Geography
- History
- Music
- Art
- Physical education (PE)
- Religious education (RE)
- Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Education (SMSC)
- Modern foreign languages (MFL)

Each National Curriculum subject has a specialist co-ordinator or team within the school. Teachers who are subject co-ordinators attend courses to extend their own skills, and help to plan, organise and monitor work within their subject throughout the school. To ensure the delivery of the National Curriculum, the teachers in each year group plan their work together very carefully, and teach through a number of integrated topics or themes, to provide subject balance over the school year. These are supplemented by work in individual subjects. The topics that the children study provide a coherent and structured framework for the development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. We believe that children learn by having real experiences and doing things for themselves.

Real learning doesn't happen by filling in worksheets and ticking boxes. Wherever possible, work on a topic will give the children the opportunity to gain first hand experiences; through an educational visit, examining and analysing a collection of materials or artefacts, or by inviting visitors with specialised knowledge into school. This is because children learn by "doing" – no worksheet or computer screen can compete with an opportunity to try something out yourself, whether it is pulling up a carrot on the allotments, filtering and testing water from the River Chelmer, or using a pulley to lift a heavy weight!

Class Organisation

Children are divided into classes according to their age. The work for each year group is carefully planned by its teachers so that children of the same age will follow a similar curriculum. Class organisation is flexible, and includes class, group and individual work and instruction, depending on the subject and skills to be taught. Every child is given challenging work at an appropriate level of the National Curriculum

English

Our high-quality English curriculum at Dunmow St Mary's Primary, fully integrated with the other subjects too, teaches our children the importance of speaking and writing fluently to communicate their individual ideas and emotions, whilst through their speaking and listening others can communicate with them. This enables all our children to become fully participating members of society and prepares and equips them with key skills for life.

Writing

Our topic based curriculum ensures that the age old gripe of 'I don't know what to write!' is never heard in our school! Children are always bursting with ideas, especially from all the first-hand experiences they receive at our school. Some of the most characterful writing has been achieved through a real sense of involvement from our children: a letter explaining a soldier's feelings on the Western Front in Year 4, explaining what happened while observing a caterpillar turn into a butterfly in Reception, and poetry inspired by a frosty morning in January in Year 5's Narnia topic, are just a very few examples of the quality writing we achieve naturally.

To help structure children's sentences and overall writing, many of Pie Corbett's 'Talk for writing' ideas have been integrated into the curriculum so it is common to see children 'talking' the new punctuation skills they are being taught whilst having fun using actions and symbols to help to embed these skills.

Reading

Reading is taught through a phonics programme which will only stop once an individual child has mastered the required skills. Most of our children become fluent readers at a young age and for them our aim is to extend their reading comprehension and research skills so that they can use and appreciate increasingly difficult and varied texts. Children who are learning to read are instructed using a combination of the most appropriate methods, as well as practising particular reading skills through carefully designed activities. They will have access to several schemes of graded reading books, as well as other texts chosen by their class teacher. Our "Bug Club" reading scheme, available at different and progressively more challenging levels is available to all year groups. The scheme has a wide range of interesting books and on line texts which can be accessed on a home computer by children and parents.

Our incredible library ('One of the very best Primary School libraries I have seen as President of the School Library Association,' said Kevin Crossley-Holland in 2013) continues to be at the centre of the school. Fully self-funded through fund raisers and booksales, the library works hard to ensure that the best and most up-to-date books, magazines, comics and newspapers are available to our children. So many pupils also regularly work in the library and support it by recommending their favourite books.

The Reading Ambassadors Scheme which has been running since 2015 encourages children in each class to take a real pride in their reading and to share best reads and enthusiasm for reading with their friends. It has proved to be very popular with the classes and will continue in 2016-17.

Spelling and Grammar

Spelling: Children in Early years and Key Stage 1 have a designated 15 minute Letters and Sounds session which is primarily to support children's reading phonic skills. However, as a natural extension of reading words, the children are also exposed to spelling them. In junior classes, the children have focused spelling sessions to learn key letter patterns (for example, '-ough' or '-cious') and as children learn these they are encouraged to use these spellings in their own writing. Spellings are sent home weekly by all teachers and are tested the following week. Incorrect spellings are identified in writing, increasingly by the children themselves as they get older, and dictionary use is encouraged at appropriate levels in the junior classes.

Lists of key spellings are provided in the National Curriculum. We put a large emphasis on learning these words both in spelling sessions and in everyday writing.

Grammar: We consider it a priority to ensure that alongside imaginative and creative writing, that the children learn how to express these ideas in the clearest and most accurate way. Therefore designated grammar lessons are part of the curriculum in English to ensure children acquire and become aware of these crucial aspects of crafting writing. It is equally vital that through quality modeling and in some cases, subtle and sensitive correction, the children learn how to speak using Standard English.

Speaking and Listening

A lively and stimulating curriculum such as ours naturally encourages all of our children to develop their speaking and listening skills to a very high degree. Drama is a key part of many topics (such as the topic on 'Ancient Egypt' in Year 3) and children comment on how this use of play is a crucial one for them in enjoying a topic! Some topics in the Junior classes may include debate where children can begin to hone both speaking and listening skills by discussing key points in an argument. Our Pupil Voice council and Reading Ambassadors and Champions regularly meet to discuss issues arising from their individual classes.

Mathematics

Our Mathematics Curriculum is partly integrated within our topic-based approach. Wherever a concept can be linked to a real-life or would be taught well through an imaginative and creative response to the topic we will do so.

However, some aspects of mathematics can be taught less effectively when a tenuous or inefficient connection is made with a topic: we would therefore discourage teaching division in Year 6 by creating pages of word problems about dividing Macbeth's 33,456 soldiers into equally sized troops, just for the sake of making a connection! However, excellent connections are readily taken advantage of, such as using scales to measure the temperature of water freezing during the wintry Narnia topic, or drawing a graph of rainfall in the Amazon rainforest in Year 4's Rainforest topic.

The Mathematics curriculum from Reception to Year 6 ensures the children acquire and develop skills in the following areas. Some of the areas (such as Roman Numerals) only appear in older year groups, and children begin their work in mathematics with using whole numbers, fractions being introduced from Year 2 and decimals from Year 3.

Number (Place value, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, percentages, Roman numerals)

Measurement (using metric units such as kilometers, millilitres etc, conversion, area, volume, perimeter, telling the time)

Geometry (drawing and visualizing 2-D and 3D shapes, angles, symmetry, classification of shapes; using coordinates, describing movements, plotting points on grids)

Statistics (drawing graphs, using bar charts, pictograms, tables)

Daily explicit teaching of the basic number skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals and percentages are taught through Number Time, our school's individual and self-designed programme of work to develop children's fluency with number skills.

We consider that a rich Mathematics curriculum should not only teach children the core skills of Number, Measurement, Statistics and Geometry but also to ensure that these skills can be applied in a range of ways, including solving worded problems, and investigating real-life problems in a first-hand way. Many of the opportunities offered in our curriculum support children's 'comprehension' skills of how to connect the 'Maths World' numeric expression to the 'Real World' contexts which they underpin.

Science

As a core subject, the study of Science stands firmly at the centre of every topic the children enjoy in our school.

The Science curriculum consists of a development of understanding of concepts around the following areas:

Foundation stage and Key Stage 1

- Plants (growth, health, naming plants and trees)
- Animals (identifying animals and naming carnivores, herbivores etc.)
- Uses of everyday Materials (naming materials and associating qualities with these (e.g. cling-film is waterproof)
- Seasonal Changes (observing changes; describing weather)

Key Stage 2

Aspects of these (such as Plants and Animals) are further developed in Key Stage 2 classes, though additional focus is made on:

- Rocks
- Light
- Forces and magnets
- Habitats
- States of matter
- Sound
- Electricity
- Earth and Space
- Habitats
- Evolution and inheritance

The conservation area, along the side of the school field, provides an invaluable resource for the scientific study of habitats, plants and animals. The Year 2 topic 'Imagination' develops a creative response to plants and animals by visiting the Botanic Gardens where children learn about plant life in different countries. They use this scientifically accurate information to base completely imagined 'New Plant' designs.

We aim to develop scientific skills of observation, prediction, testing, and forming conclusions, which children are taught to apply across the whole science curriculum. We are particularly concerned to develop skills of scientific analysis of data and readily encourage children's own curiosity at the scientific world by allowing them to pose, shape and investigate their own investigation questions.

"I wonder what will happen if I change the size of the plasticine ball in the glass? Will it make the pitch of the glass sound higher or lower? Could something else happen?" is a typical response from a Year 6 child observed recently following a standard investigation. We see it as our job at Dunmow St Mary's to ensure that the 'standard' work perhaps seen in other school, is developed to even more creative and individual heights!

Computing

We are proud of our designated ICT suite which children visit each week. Life in the twenty-first century demands a high degree of skill, confidence and familiarity with using a wide range of computer applications and many of the children already start school at an advanced level of technological awareness. We endeavour to encourage, nurture and challenge this knowledge and understanding through a rich and broad Computing curriculum. Each classroom is equipped with a range of exciting technologies, such as interactive whiteboards (some touch-screen boards), digital cameras and visualisers, which all help to stimulate the best possible learning from the children. We also have a set of ninety LearnPads which allow children to bring individual access to digital cameras, video software, the internet and online materials into the classroom or even outdoor environments.

Some of the projects which the children explore include:

Programming skills

We use BeeBots from Reception to help children to learn about simple programming skills in a practical and fun way. This then develops into using 2Simple and Logo software in the ICT suite to programme a character to move around or draw patterns on screen.

In Key Stage 2, the children are introduced to the vibrant and rich programming language of Scratch, where popular projects include designing their own games and presentations. By the time the children are working at Year 6, they are fully ready to be introduced to the complex language of Python, preparing them for secondary Computing lessons...and beyond!

Children are also focused on solving problems as part of all Computing projects at school. It is a crucial skill to be able to debug or adapt a project independently and this we develop from Key Stage 1.

Other software applications

Children enjoy developing motor skills in Reception and Key Stage 1 by using online art software and explore ways in which computers can develop art skills in different ways to those on paper.

It is central to all our Computing work that the children learn how the software being used can help them to accomplish given goals. Our curriculum sets challenging tasks which need technology to make the outcomes more accurate and effective. A good example of this appears in Year 5's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory topic which includes using spread sheets and analysis programmes to collect, sort and refine data and helps the children find the answers to questionnaires they have designed.

Design and Technology

An increasingly technologically-based world demands our children to be fully adept at a wide range of design and technical skills. Our topics offer a stimulating range of creative and practical projects which develop such skills to a very high degree.

Over their primary years at Dunmow St Mary's the children learn how to make models from an initial stimulus then evaluate and develop these as the years progress. They learn new and effective ways to strengthen their models, such as using particular wood structures and corner reinforcement in 'The Three Little Pigs' topic in Year 4 where the children need to make a strong house to resist wolf attacks!

Mechanical systems are evident in Year 5 for example, where the children make a fully working cam-toy using wheels and handles to make a scene from a favourite Greek myth.

We also introduce children to using Flowol in Years 5 and 6 to make a programmed electrical response model to illustrate a journey around the land of Narnia (in 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' topic) and to light up the scale model of a fantasy school the children have created in their local geography project 'School of the Future'

Cooking is key life skill and we ensure that every year the children learn some integral cooking skills as part of their D&T work. As a Healthy School we are committed to ensuring that the children learn about good nutrition as part of these topics. A good example of how our skills develop over the year is evident in comparing how Year 2 learn how to make a simple savoury soup in the 'Pumpkin Soup' topic, and when they reach Year 6 they review these skills in a more advanced context of adapting a soup recipe with limited ingredients by designing an authentic Saxon soup. (This last example results in a very colourful Purple Carrot soup as children learn that orange carrots were not available in this country until the Tudor period!)

In addition to this, every year, we teach children to make their own books (culminating in a fully stitched and bound book in Year 6) which emphasises the huge degree of pride we place on the written and illustrative work which the children complete each year.

Geography

Exploring and learning about the world around us is one of the greatest pleasures of growing up and we take every opportunity to ensuring children learn about this in a variety of stimulating ways.

In Reception, the work in Forest Schools days helps the children to become aware of the variety of environments in the local area and even start to use compass directions and maps! Following this, In Key Stage 1, children begin their exploration of local environments and make maps and plans of these areas. We enjoy taking children into the copse, High Street and local buildings to discover more about Dunmow itself, but we also support the children through a rich variety of visits such as Colchester Zoo, Hatfield Forest and Frinton sea front where they learn about hot and cold areas of the planet, rivers, soils, oceans and forests. In Year 1 we also have a designated Geography topic, 'Good to be me' where the children in the class from other countries share their geographical and cultural features of their native land. Key Stage 2 focus in more depth on some of the geographical aspects begun in the infant years. For example, Year 5 have a full topic on the country of India, focusing in detail on climate zones and human geography, whilst the Year 6 school journey to Norfolk focuses at first hand on the differences between an inland and sea-side town.

History

We aim through our topics which specifically focus on historical themes to ensure that our pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past from the earliest times to the present day and that of the wider world. Children's curiosity is sparked through being exposed at first hand to experiences of ancient places, historical houses, artefacts and discovery of key personalities, groups and cultures of the past.

The children will also develop understanding of some of the key historical concepts of 'empire', 'civilization' and 'parliament' for example, and understand more about historical change as they get older.

In Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 the children will begin to shape their own concept of history through study of:

- Changes within living memory
- National and globally significant events
- The lives of some significant individuals (such as Sir Francis Drake in year 2's 'Pirates!' topic)

During Key Stage 2 the children continue to develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British and global history.

They study:

- Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age
- The Roman Empire (Year 4)

- The Anglo Saxons and Viking struggles (Year 6 'Beowulf')
- Local History studies (Year 3: 'St Mary's Church')
- A study of an aspect of British history
- Ancient Egypt (Year 3)
- Ancient Greece (Year 5)
- A non-European society

Music

Music is a central part of our curriculum at St Mary's. Children enjoy learning about key musicians, composers, singers and performers throughout their seven years with us. Topics which have a particularly strong musical connection include 'Rainforests' in Year 4 where children use body percussion to create the sound of a forest storm, and 'Macbeth' where the children put on a 'mini-production' of Macbeth with songs written to explore the drama of Shakespeare's original play in new ways.

Singing is a major part of collective worship. We share with the children St Augustine's belief that "*A person whosings prays twice.*" Beautiful music itself is prayer and we are delighted by our children's fantastic collaborative sound in assemblies and church services. Parents attending our 2016 Passion Service at St Mary's church commented that it was a particularly moving experience and where music was key part of this.

We are so proud that many of our children learn a new instrument while attending St Mary's. Currently we offer lessons for guitar, woodwind, brass and piano though we always endeavour to support children learning any other instruments. We are also one of the few schools to own and play a steel band and to own a full set of African Drums!

We are regularly involved with community projects, such as performing at the Flitch trials and Dunmow Carnival, and we have also taken children to retirement and care homes in the area to perform to the residents.

Our Christmas and end of year productions are extremely ambitious and have become a firm favourite with the children and adults alike. In recent years we have performed special adaptations written specifically for our children of 'The Nutcracker', 'A Christmas Carol' and 'Hansel and Gretel'. In 2013, Year 6 gave the first performance of a new opera 'Sea Tongue' which was a collaboration with the famous poet and storyteller, Kevin Crossley-Holland.

Art

The huge potential for creativity implicit in all of our topic themes naturally inspires a great deal of high quality artwork from the children. Responses to themes in the topics invoke naturally imaginative art projects from drawing self-portraits in the children's very first topic in Reception to creating your own space alien in a futuristic style of pencil drawing (Year 6).

Through use of pencil, paint and pen, and larger scale work of collage, clay and textiles, each child is enabled to explore their own artistic responses to work in other subjects. Examples include:

- close observational drawing of pirate costume (linking to history in Year 2's Pirates topic)
- Creating clay gargoyles in the Church topic in Year 3 (inspired by geography and history of the local area)
- Pastel pictures of intense close ups of leaves and flowers from the rainforest (supporting Geography and Science work in Year 4)
- Creating repeated patterns in print (exploring the work of William Morris and symmetry in Year 5's Victorians topic)
- Using symbolism to represent key ideas from a story (through reading Macbeth in Year 6)

Children are encouraged to keep an ongoing sketchbook which is passed from year group to year group, tracing the stages of each child's explorations of a range of art skills.

Physical education (PE)

Following the tremendous success of the London 2012 Olympics, we have fully taken up the challenge of ensuring

Children are taught progressive skills in games, dance and educational gymnastics. The hall is very well equipped with gymnastics equipment and we have a wide variety of resources for outdoor games. The emphasis is on learning skills such as catching and throwing, and teaching co-operative effort in preparation for team games.

We have a strong association with the PE department of the Helena Romanes School and Sixth Form College. Students studying sports there (many of them our former pupils), help as Sports Leaders to run games lessons, and after school clubs in many sports and dance activities.

We have a heated outdoor swimming pool which enables the children to learn to swim under the guidance of a fully qualified instructor and also to learn about water safety. The children have the opportunity to participate in team games through extra curricular clubs, which include football, netball, tag rugby, multi skills, dance,

gymnastics, cross country, pilates, street dance, sports hall athletics and athletics, rounders and cricket in the summer. Some clubs are free and some have a charge which is paid directly to the sports coach or instructor.

We are members of local leagues and coach teams to participate in inter-school competition. We have enjoyed much success, and currently hold a number of trophies.

Religious education (RE)

RE provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning of purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right or wrong, and what it means to be human. We aim to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views that offer answers to questions such as these, including secular world views. Our curriculum offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development. It enhances pupils' awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures.

As a Church School, our main focus is naturally focused on Christianity. Explicit teaching of major world religions occurs in all year groups. During their time in Reception and Years 1 and 2, our youngest children enjoy discovering connections between more familiar celebrations, such as weddings, Christmas and Easter, and the ways in which special traditions and Holy Days - such as Holi, Divali or Hannukah - are celebrated by Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, or those of major religions other than Christianity.

We then ensure that we explore aspects of the following main religions and belief systems in more explicit detail in the following year groups:

Year 3: Christianity (In 'St Mary's Church' topic)

Year 4: Buddhism ('The Firework Maker's Daughter'); Judaism ('The Prince of Egypt' topic)

Year 5: Hinduism ('India' Topic)

Year 6: Islam; Humanism (both explored in the 'Eye on the World' topic)

Our Vision and Values statement gives further details about how we integrate these aspects into our RE curriculum. We also have regular, daily collective worship, which always includes spiritually themed singing, prayers, stories and celebration. Our collective worship daily themes include:

- Whole-school celebration of achievement

- Singing practice (of worship songs)
- Class celebration assemblies
- Stories and characters from the Bible
- Values assemblies (themed around the current Value e.g. Responsibility)

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC)

As a Church school, we uphold the teachings of Jesus Christ to care about ourselves and others in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional ways. Our Vision and Values statement gives more detail about this on a school-wide level, though our SMSC curriculum - in both explicit and implicit ways – supports the children in their daily lives. Our children are taught to understand that while different people may hold different views about what is 'right' and 'wrong', all people living in England are subject to its law and, through this, a high degree of tolerance, compassion and empathy are clearly visible in the attitudes of our children at Dunmow St Mary's.

We are proud to address some challenging aspects of SMSC as an integral part of our curriculum in a nurturing and supportive environment.

From Reception, children are exposed to the wide range of similarities and differences between individuals and between groups of the community. Our youngest children often explore such issues through a rich and diverse range of picture books and short films, preparing them for later discussions of topics in the junior classes such as bullying, gender issues, responsibility, community and personal safety and security. Books and films used as central parts of topics in Infant classes include 'The Boy in the Tangerine Dress', 'I love you already' 'Hug me' and 'Dangle' (an amazing short film which produces a large scale topic focusing on crime, responsibility and supporting and making good choices.

Junior classes continue to put a major emphasis on using quality literature and film to stimulate imaginative and topical responses to current issues. Topics include 'On a beam of light' in Year 3 and 'The Firework Maker's Daughter' in Year 4 which both explore how to develop positive attitudes to struggle and challenge, and books such as 'George' (about a transgender child in primary school) and 'Oliver Button is a Sissy' have been used with Year 6 recently to address issues of gender stereotypes and pride in our individuality.

Drugs Education

Year 6 children explore issues related to drugs, for example smoking. They will discuss how to resist peer pressure to do

things they do not really want to do

Sex education

The children are taught about the workings of the human body as an integral part of their science curriculum from Reception to Year 6. During Years 5 and 6, sex education will form a part of the children's studies. Parents will be informed before this takes place and may view the teaching materials to be used if they wish.

Modern foreign languages (MFL)

Studying foreign languages is an excellent way to liberate us from insularity and provide us with an insight into other cultures.

Children from Year 3 are taught French every week and in Year 6 the children learn Spanish so they begin secondary school with a good grasp of two different languages.

We are fortunate to have many children attending our school who are originally from other countries. We fully celebrate the diversity of our school community and often these children enjoy sharing aspects of their native language and culture with their friends, classes and sometimes whole school! We also have a designated teacher to help support these children in their acquisition of English skills.

Each year, we take part in the International Day of Languages and this has become a popular and regular fixture in the annual calendar. Children celebrate diversity through learning about different languages and cultures by exploring lots of different activities on this day, usually in September. Working alongside other year groups on this day is an excellent way to support all ages to find excitement and fun in learning MFL!