



MERRYLANDS
PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

CURRICULUM POLICY

January 2021

Rationale

The Primary National Curriculum, statutory from September 2014, states:

'The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement. The national curriculum is just one element in the education of every child. There is time and space in the school day and in each week, term, and year to range beyond the national curriculum specifications. The national curriculum provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum.'

At Merrylands, we believe that the key responsibility is high quality teaching and learning in every classroom each day. Embedded and sustained improvement is dependent on this. Our expectation therefore is that all pupils are provided with quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of achievement and engagement to become confident, articulate, independent learners.

Curriculum

We have designed a fully comprehensive curriculum framework that meets the requirements of the latest National Curriculum review. Our curriculum continues to ensure that:

- the children's learning is both meaningful and benefits from a specific focus on the core requirements of the English and Mathematics curriculum
- it is based on an analysis of how it can benefit the needs of our specific children and their community
- it is designed to ensure that children can become upwardly socially mobile
- it supports children in developing global and the fundamental British values
- children are given opportunities to actively engage on their learning through meaningful and applied contexts
- children know they can be expert learners and that there are no limits on their ability
- children are able to develop a growth mind set to help support the effectiveness of their learning

The curriculum is balanced and broadly based and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils. It prepares children for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life. It introduces the essential knowledge they need to be educated responsible citizens and develops a growing appreciation of the breadth of human creativity and achievement.

We aim for the pupils to leave the school not only with key skills and knowledge in different subject areas but also with an interest and fascination in the pursuit of greater understanding as a foundation to lifelong learning. We also aim for the children to be able to contribute, cooperate, reflect, and respect each other's views to develop an understanding that much of what we achieve in society is through collaboration and teamwork.

We audit the views of the parents to ensure that the curriculum is meeting the needs of the local community. Parents are encouraged to work with the school so that they can share their expertise in the wider world and give first-hand knowledge of their cultures.

The school makes considerable efforts to ensure children have exposure to a wide experience beyond their local community during which these concepts are shown, through for example, sporting events, residential visits, and outdoor centres and through visiting speakers from other religious denominations and groups. Our strong-rooted values-based understanding gives us an excellent platform for embracing difference.

The School Curriculum

Meaningful Learning

We believe children learn best when they actively engage in their learning through meaningful and applied contexts. We call the approach Meaningful Learning. We believe that all children can be expert learners and that there are no limits on ability. We ensure that children develop a growth mind set to help support the effectiveness of their learning. We help children develop a positive 'can do' approach that enables them not to set fixed limits on their learning potential.

We aim to ensure that deep learning can be applied in a range of different curriculum areas. This enables children to master the requirements of the curriculum. We focus on learning approaches that require children to apply their skills and knowledge through problem solving and analytical thinking.

Growth Mindset and the Expert Learner

At Merrylands, we challenge the belief that excellence is the result of innate ability. We believe that everybody can be an expert learner and that ability can be developed through applied learning and deliberate practice.

We highlight the importance of:

- providing opportunities and support to develop skills
- being motivated to succeed
- undergoing extensive deliberate practice
- building powerful mental models to handle and organise information
- receiving continuous and effective feedback to improve performance
- developing self-regulation to monitor performance

Learners learn best when they have a growth mind set. The term Growth Mindset refers to a way of thinking, learning, and taking on challenges. A person with a growth mind set is open to constructive criticism, takes feedback and uses it, takes on new challenges, pushes themselves outside of their comfort zone and shows resilience and perseverance.

Studies show that it is people with a growth mindset (as opposed to a fixed mindset) who achieve in life, are successful in all they do and are happy. Of course, this is exactly what we want for all the children.

Organisation of the Curriculum

Where appropriate, a cross-curricular thematic approach is used to teach most subjects in the curriculum. This approach aims to ensure pupils have an understanding and appreciation of the wider context of subject knowledge, understanding and the application of key learning skills. However, some subjects are taught discretely due to the nature of the knowledge and skills being taught e.g. Maths, PE, Music and RE.

Each lesson has a clear subject learning focus which identifies the expectations for children to achieve the expected standard for their age and the expectations for greater depth. Where reading, writing and mathematical skills are being applied, that the expectation for high standards is commensurate with their ability in those subjects.

The chosen themes are exciting topics which act as stimuli for all the learning that takes place within most of the curriculum subjects. The themes allow for subjects to be linked and give context to the skills which the children are learning. Topics are chosen to meet the requirements of the national curriculum and to reflect the children's interests as well as events happening locally, nationally, or internationally.

When selecting topic themes, we give much thought to selecting topics which:

- place the development of children's literacy at the heart of all learning
- are broad enough to allow for a range of curriculum subjects to be explored in sufficient depth across the school
- can be explored at an appropriate depth and level of challenge
- enthuse staff and students
- allow for exciting 'wow' events to take place to capture children's imagination
- allow for constant reinforcement of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- are accessible to all students of all abilities including those with SEN and EAL

Breadth, Depth and Progression

Breadth: in selecting the topic themes, staff are careful to choose topics which allow a broad range of curriculum subjects to be explored. Therefore, staff give careful consideration in selecting themes which can be taken in a variety of directions, exploring a wide range of skills across the curriculum. In some themes, certain subjects are more prominent than in others. It is the role of subject leaders and the senior leadership team to ensure that adequate time is dedicated to each subject across the school. It is also part of the role of subject leaders to ensure that the themes facilitate the provision of their subject and suggest ways that staff could link the themes to their subject.

Depth: we understand that the topic themes must allow for the depth of study to be maintained in each year group. To ensure that this happens, staff only make links to the theme when it is appropriate and, if skills or knowledge need to be taught discretely, that will take place. Subject leaders take responsibility for monitoring the breadth and depth at which their subjects are taught.

Progression: each term, subject leaders request samples of work from each year group to ensure that there is a progression in skills taking place as the children progress through the year groups.

Planning

Planning takes place across the curriculum in three waves; long term planning, medium term (for the entire half term) and weekly lesson plans.

Long term planning is the overview provided by subject leaders and phase leaders to teachers which detail the skills and overall coverage that the children in each year group need to possess by the end of an academic year. This planning is essential as it ensures that progression is taking place across the school within the whole school theme.

Medium term planning is the planning which is completed by the class teacher to show the lessons within a unit or theme. This planning will also identify skills and focus on clear learning journeys. Outcomes for learning are made explicit in this point of planning as well as opportunities for trips, visits, and extra-curricular activities. The learning objectives on these plans will be taken directly from the long term plan or reflect a need identified by the class teacher's assessment for learning.

Weekly planning will identify clear steps to success to help children achieve the learning intention, higher order questioning to extend children's thinking, as well as differentiation and the role of other adults.

Parent Supporting and Learning Together Sessions

At Merrylands, we believe that children progress best when the school and parents work in partnership. To support parents with helping their children learn, we run a comprehensive range of parent and pupil sessions.

Parents' Evenings

Parents' Evening happens twice per year and all parents are welcomed into school for a meeting with their child's teacher regarding their learning and general development. This is supplemented by the termly and end of year reports, which show the children's academic levels, progress, and performance.

Parents' questionnaire

Each year, a parent's questionnaire is sent out to gain their views on several issues, including the curriculum. The results are compiled, and a summary is provided for staff, parents, and governors so that they can see how their views are making an impact on school development.

Learning Weeks/Days

Each year we hold a range of themed curriculum weeks and learning days. These events may be subject specific (Maths/Enterprise Week, Book Week) or linked to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (World Autism Awareness Day, Safer Internet Day, St. George's Day).

Children's Leadership

At Merrylands, we believe that all children should have the opportunity to develop their leadership potential. There are many informal opportunities given to children to do this during their time at school. We provide many formal opportunities to develop leadership as well. Children do this through the:

- The School Council
- Head Boy and Girl
- Eco Warriors
- Team Captains
- Anti-bullying Ambassadors

Enterprise

We believe every child should leave school prepared for life in modern Britain. That is why we think it is vital to give children the opportunity to develop key employability skills that will help them when they are eventually employed. Merrylands incorporate enterprise learning into our curriculum to help children learn about the workplace and to inspire them to reach their full potential.

They develop key skills they need not only for the world of work but also for day-to-day life including:

- an understanding of how business works
- the ability to work in a team
- improved communication skills
- increased enthusiasm and self-confidence
- willingness to take responsibility and show initiative
- time management
- effective work and social skills

Throughout the year children develop their enterprise through a variety of activities.

Outdoor Learning

We use the extensive school grounds and local area to support children's learning. The philosophy is to encourage and inspire children through positive outdoor experiences. Children will have the opportunity to learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others. The children use full sized tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and become self-motivated.

Early Years Foundation Stage

We believe that an outstanding education in EYFS will set children up with the skills needed to ensure the best possible outcomes throughout their formal education. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education. We believe that every child is an individual and deserves personalised learning within highly stimulating classroom and outdoor learning environments. We follow the requirements of the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' (March 2017) and the new Development Matters guidance (2020) that supports the delivery of the framework. This guidance is used to support the changing curriculum and practice that is part of the Early Years reforms (early adopter year).

The EYFS for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the foundation stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

Assessment

Assessment in the core subjects is by teacher assessment. From Year 1 upwards, age-appropriate tests are used termly to support teacher assessment. These assessments are recorded and updated regularly throughout the term on the school's assessment system.

Pupils are assessed each term in the foundation subjects against the year group objectives they have been taught, with several pieces of work demonstrating whether a child is working below the expected standard, at the expected standard or at greater depth. The levels achieved by the pupils are recorded in the school's assessment system. Work is moderated periodically by subject leaders

to ensure consistency in teacher assessment. Assessment summaries are used to monitor attainment and progress in the subjects so that priorities for improvement and training can be identified and put into the subject action plans.

Educational Visits

We believe that children benefit from first-hand experience gained through practical activities, educational visits, and visitors. Where possible, children visit sites and museums and have visitors to school relevant to the topics being studied.

Special Educational Needs and Able Pupils

The curriculum is designed to provide access, opportunity, and challenge to every child. Learning opportunities are planned, differentiated, and adapted to meet the needs of all children. Typically, this might mean that in a lesson there would be three different levels of work set for the class, however on occasions this might be individually differentiated to meet a child's particular needs. Children who have special educational needs and disabilities are assessed to ensure additional support is targeted to help them, with outcomes and impact recorded. The class teacher, alongside the SENCo will discuss a child's needs and how they can be supported to access the curriculum. Children with SEND will have access to a range of appropriate resources to help them progress. Children who are particularly able in a subject are also provided with opportunities for further challenge, development, and extension. (This approach complies with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Regulations 2014).

Equality, SMSC and British Values

At Merrylands, all children have access to the curriculum regardless of their individual ability, gender, race, cultural or social background or any physical or sensory difficulty. Our aim is for all children to make progress through the provision of a balanced curriculum. To engage all children, cultural diversity, home languages, gender and religious beliefs are all celebrated. Our curriculum includes a wide range of texts and other resources which represent the diversity and backgrounds of all our children.

We recognise that social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development is central to the education of all pupils and this permeates through the whole curriculum and ethos of the school. It is reflected in the behaviours and interaction of individuals and throughout the provision of teaching, resources and learning environments. We promote 'British Values' through our spiritual, social and cultural education and it is a fundamental aspect of the school's curriculum to support the development of the 'whole child'. (This approach complies with the Equality Act 2010).

Wider opportunities and Extra-Curricular Activities

We value the importance of a wider curriculum and offer children a broad range of adventurous activities, sports clubs, gymnastics, dance, drama, creative arts, technology, languages, and music. These are regarded as an essential part of children's learning and developing their skills and talents.

Subject Leaders

Subject leaders provide leadership of their subject and are responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in their curriculum areas along with its organisation and breadth of study across the school. They are also responsible for ensuring there is access to and availability of necessary resources and the maintenance and efficacy of any digital platforms. Each subject leader

creates an action plan that focuses on annual objectives for the subject area, linked to the school's objectives, and includes an evaluation of impact for the academic year.

Monitoring and Review

The curriculum is subject to regular review, responding to statutory requirements and relevant evidence-based advances in pedagogy, educational thinking, and technology, reflecting the Trust Principles of Teaching and Learning. Regular curriculum updates are given to Local Governing Bodies.