

# Birdwell Primary School

Curriculum Offer

September 2018



**Big ideas for little people**

***Primary School is a special time in our children lives. Our aim is to provide our pupils with a fun, absorbing, challenging and exciting learning experience, designed by us with the rigour and standards needed to provide breadth and depth in the curriculum.***

***Birdwell Primary School believe that excellent levels of attainment, progress and any other measure by which we assess the progress of our pupils, is a product of engaged, challenged and motivated young people, rather than an outcome to aim for. In other words, we should not teach for pupils to pass tests, passing tests should happen because our pupils have gained the knowledge and skills to do so as part of their curriculum.***

***The way we arrive at our curriculum is something we are very proud of at Birdwell:***

## **Creating our curriculum -**

### **➤ INTENT**

The Birdwell curriculum is topic based, as commonly found in schools across the country. What we believe makes our curriculum special is that the content is selected by our pupils each year and the whole school collaborate and work on the same topics at various intervals and depths through-out the year. This has led to rich, cross-curricular outcomes that encompass the whole of our school community. It has provided collaborative links between classes and across Key Stages. Allowing us to illustrate the progression evident across our school, providing models of excellence for younger pupils and opportunity to coach and embed the knowledge and skills they have learnt. We use the following process:

- In summer term, our Year 5 pupils are shown the National Curriculum and taught how to use it to plan from. The children work in teams to come up with exciting topics. They then have to use the curriculum to suggest links to subjects or ideas for schemes of work. All of this information goes in to a letter they write to Mr Bailey, pitching their topic choice and justifying how it covers the National Curriculum
- Mr Bailey reads the letters and selects 3 winning topics. He creates a **Topic Outline** for the year, similar to below:

| Autumn 1             | Autumn 2         | Spring 1             | Spring 2   | Summer 1             | Summer 2                                   |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| Whole School Topic 1 | Teacher's choice | Whole School Topic 2 | Teacher & Class pick from the rest of the Year 5 suggestions | Whole School Topic 3 | Class suggest or help plan their own topic |

- Mr Swallow has created **Objective Grids** for each paired year group. These show all the objectives we expect our pupils to cover in 2 years. Staff identify objectives that lend themselves to their topic and highlight them as they are used.

### **➤ IMPLEMENTAION**

We provide our staff with paired planning time and also cover PPA time in pairs to encourage collaboration at the planning stage. The staff teams create a **Topic Map** for the half term. They begin planning the Whole School Topic by identifying their own unique spin on it for their year group. (For example, if the topic is 'Around the World' we may see a teacher decide upon, 'Around the World in the Lap of Luxury' or 'Around the world on a shoe-string'. Another may go for 'Who lives Around the World?' or 'Around the World in 80

meals'). This helps inject variety throughout the school and provide opportunity for teachers to match the topic to the objectives required by their year group.

The **Topic Map** suggests 3 or 4 units to be covered during the topic. These units always begin with a high-challenge question for the children to investigate. We expect each unit to incorporate a writing and maths element as well as a bias towards some of the Foundation subjects. Some units may be Science or art heavy, some units may lend themselves more naturally to History or to Geography. Our objective grids help us ensure we are covering what we need to and identify gaps.

Individual units vary in length between a couple of days up to a couple of weeks. Each unit requires a **Unit Plan** to be written. At this point or paired teachers can choose between collaborating on the unit plan or writing it individually to better meet the objectives for their year group.

Unit plans are where staff identify the teaching sequence, what the most effective order to deliver the subjects and session is. This provides rich opportunities for cross-curricular links. Furthermore, this helps ensure that when the sessions are delivered to the children in class, the teacher can illustrate the links across sessions and subjects explicitly. This helps the metacognitive process of our pupils, helping them see how what they have learned has contributed to the unit, helping them identify future steps/learning required and giving value to what they are currently doing. Even small, typically under-valued elements (such as a SPaG skill, times table or handwriting session) can be seen as a vital part of succeeding in that unit.

In class, each planned unit offers a unique challenge for our children. A fun, special hook into the context for all the subsequent learning in the unit. **"Context is king!"** Our children are reminded each session how and what they have learned and how this fits together and contributes to meeting their challenge. Teachers emphasise links across subjects and learning, enhancing the metacognitive value of each session. There is frequent opportunity for collaboration (much more like real-life work situations) allowing pupils to contribute individual skills...giving value to the artists, musicians, programmers, scientists, managers, problems solvers and doers rather than just the writers and mathematicians. Teachers weave these subjects, knowledge and skills together in order to produce high quality outcomes. To produce something which the pupils could not have done to that standard before the unit and the teaching and learning they just participated in.

Contextualising the curriculum in this way provides rich opportunities for mastery of the curriculum objectives. The context requires application of skills and objectives, and each context will require this in a different way. Collaborative problem solving and reasoning encourages application of previously taught skills and knowledge and the opportunity to take learning & outcomes as far as the pupils are able.

## **Engagement –**

### **➤ OUTCOMES**

Giving a significant proportion of the ownership of our curriculum to our pupils helps us choose topics and tasks that are interesting to them. Ownership is a great way of creating responsibility for making units succeed and inspiring pride in the outcomes.

We see the way the abstract way the majority of National Curriculum Objectives are written as an invitation to create a very special curriculum all of our own. The statements in the N.C. are a minimum expected standard in that subject, that is why we assess pupils who achieve those statements as working at an expected level. The statements are a floor standard for attainment not a ceiling and at Birdwell primary School, it is our view, that this is an exciting opportunity to take learning to a depth that challenges and engages our pupils regardless of their ability.

## **Coverage**

The National Curriculum statements are arranged in to **Objective Grids** for each pair of year groups to follow. As objectives are taught, they are highlighted on the grid with a tick (the colour corresponds to the Topic at the time). Revisiting objectives and applying them in different contexts is central to our approach. Each time objectives are revisited it will be in a different context and will be applied in a different way, deepening understanding. Cross curricular accumulation of skills also assigns value to them, pupils can see how the foundation subjects are necessary in the outcomes they create. So not only is coverage comprehensive and well evidenced, the objectives covered have value.

## **Depth**

Our context based curriculum will often introduce pupils to knowledge and experiences that they have never seen before. From this relatively level playing field of course, pupils will progress at their own rate. By starting out with a high-challenge problem we provide an opportunity for pupils to succeed far beyond the requirements of the curriculum's minimum expectations. The challenge questions that drive each unit are essentially adult level. This provides a lot of room for development of knowledge, skills and understanding. As children progress through their year and the school, they build a repertoire of responses they can successfully draw upon, such as accurate newspaper writing or the ability to create a line graph. We offer increasing opportunity for pupils to select their own responses to learning, again, allowing challenge to suit the pupil's ability. Two pupils who differ greatly in ability can respond to the same challenge in different ways which suit their required level of depth, skill, format, independence and the level of scaffolding required. Collaborative group work can be taken as high as the attainment of the highest ability pupil in the group whilst scaffolding and support from peers and teachers helps the rest of the group push their own limits.