

**“The touchstone of an excellent curriculum is that it instils in children a love of learning for its own sake. This means that primary children must not only learn what to study, they must also learn how to study.”**

## **The Primary Curriculum Review Executive Summary**

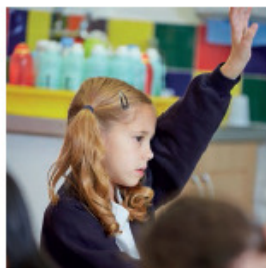


## Curriculum

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At Fir Tree, our children have an inspirational start to their learning journey in the Foundation Stage. They have a safe and nurturing environment where they feel secure and have respect for the beliefs, values and cultures of others. We prepare our children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. We therefore focus on developing essential communication, social, literacy and mathematics in a creative environment to prepare them for the challenges in the future.



The curriculum at Fir Tree has changed significantly and children now experience a holistic approach to learning. This enables teachers to plan areas of the curriculum around a common theme to enrich and ignite the children's enthusiasm for knowledge and learning. Wherever possible teachers make links between different areas of the curriculum to support the children's understand of each theme and allow time for them to be covered in greater depth.



*I love Fir Tree because the lessons are amazingly interesting, also everyone's polite.*

### Literacy

The importance of developing children's speaking and listening, reading and writing skills is highly valued. We use the New Curriculum 2014 as a basis to inform our teaching and learning and to ensure progression of key skills. We then use this as the driving force for our curriculum thus adding relevance to the themes that the children are learning and encourage them to identify the purpose of particular types of writing.

Developing our children's speaking and listening is central to our curriculum, as we believe that without the opportunity for talk we can neither read with understanding nor write meaningfully.

Opportunities for shared, guided and independent reading are well established; regular reviews and renewal of our book stock as well as reading rewards and promotion events are essential features underpinning or commitment to encouraging reading. Our Library is now at the heart of the school with books being regularly audited and updated to ensure they continue to develop the children's love for reading.

Phonics is taught in ability groups on a daily basis across Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and is reinforced throughout the curriculum. A new spelling scheme has been implemented this year to follow on from the excellent phonics work covered in KS1.

Handwriting is also given curriculum time, taught both discretely and reinforced at the point of writing.

### Maths

The Mathematics curriculum is taught through the New Curriculum 2014, and unlike other curriculum area is linked to the theme when it is appropriate. Maths teaching utilises a variety of resources to support children's learning and they are encouraged to apply this to real life situations. Our children are encouraged to question and explain through problem solving and investigative activities and enhance their knowledge while developing a wide variety of mathematical concepts.

### ICT

Information Communication Technology at Fir Tree is well resourced. Each classroom has 3 networked computers which allow all pupils controlled access to the internet, as well as a wide range of curriculum enhancing programmes on our own school network. The school also benefits from a brand new ICT suite and interactive board in order to allow the children opportunities to learn about computer coding, amongst other areas. Children are given a range of opportunities to develop their ICT skills including using the internet as a reference tool and how to keep safe while online.

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**"The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils care for and are respectful of one another..."**  
**Ofsted 2014**



*I love Fir Tree because we have a lot of practical lessons and more challenging maths lessons.*

## Science

Learning about the amazing world around us should be fun! Whether we are studying physical processes, living things or the properties of materials we want our children to ask questions, explore first-hand evidence and communicate their findings in exciting ways. They will be challenged to devise and plan investigations, make careful observations and recordings, interpret results and draw conclusions. Throughout the school we encourage children to apply their Maths, English and ICT skills in their science work and to make links between their scientific ideas, knowledge and understanding and their everyday life experiences.

## History

History is all about people and how they have shaped the communities and environments in which they live. Through teaching this subject as an integral part of class topics we aim for children to understand the impact and importance that key events and people can have on our world. As they do this, children will develop a chronological framework for their knowledge of significant events and people; use a range of historical sources and to interpret the past.

## Geography

Through Geography, children develop an understanding of the interdependence of places and people and their natural environment. Children develop a range of skills such as mapping to topics relating to not only our local area, but also the wider world and local and world environments.

## Art

As with all subjects at Fir Tree, Art is directly linked to the topic which the children learning. In this context children are given opportunities to develop their understanding of colour, line, shape, form, texture, tone and pattern and how they are used. This is achieved through working with a variety of media such as pastels, paint, fabric and clay, and learning a range of technical skills.

## D&T

Pupils are taught to develop their design and technology capabilities through a combination of knowledge and designing and making. Design and Technology (D&T) is about challenges, the exploration of ideas and seeing projects develop from start to finish. Children are provided with a balanced, stimulating and challenging programme of learning experiences.

## Music

Music lessons involve singing and work on rhythm using percussion and tuned instruments. Children are given opportunities to improvise and compose music in response to different stimuli. We aim to develop abilities and interests in making and appreciating music. We have specialist music teachers from Trinity come to our school to teach Clarinets, recorders and the trumpet. Year 3 children take part in the recorder lessons, Year 4 in the clarinets and Year 6 in the trumpet. There are then further opportunities to have lessons at school as well.

## PE

PE at Fir Tree is taught by class teachers and specialist PE teachers from our Academy partner school, Trinity, who pass on their expertise to the children in Games, Gymnastics, Dance, Athletics and Swimming. We also have our very own full time Sports Co-ordinator who teaches PE alongside the Trinity staff, runs various clubs during lunchtime and after school and takes children out to different sporting events in and around Newbury. In addition children learn about health related exercise. They are also taught to recognize and follow relevant rules and safety procedures in different activities. Sport has an important role within society and we aim to ensure that children develop the physical skills and attitudes necessary for active participation.

## RE

Religious Education (RE) follows the Berkshire Agreed Syllabus for RE. It teaches knowledge and understanding of the faiths within our multi-cultural society. Parents who wish to withdraw their children from RE lessons and/or assemblies may do so. However, assemblies are an important feature of school life and every effort is made to make them relevant and accessible to all children. Parents who wish to exercise this right should contact the Head Teacher.

## Homework

Research has shown that schools with an effective homework policy are effective at raising standards. At Fir Tree, we always wish the best for our children. We expect all children to take their reading book and spellings home and share these with an adult. In addition, the KS2 children will have at least one piece of 'formal homework' to consolidate activities learnt during the week. This is given out on a Wednesday to be handed back in on a Monday. This will help to develop independent study skills and encourage children to extend their learning. Your help and encouragement is warmly welcomed.