



## **Mixed-Aged Class Strategy**

### **Our Vision**

At Saxton Primary School, our over-arching vision is to have 'good people, doing well'. We believe that giving our children the best possible start will achieve this aim.

Our vision for our first class (Willow) is to give pupils the strong foundations for learning in EYFS and then achieve the aspirations of our KS1 curriculum. Teaching will be delivered at an individual level. There will be opportunities to have direct teaching from an adult, either as a class or in a group, and there are opportunities to have play-based learning in each year group. We believe that this has numerous benefits and helps to create learners who are confident, independent, social, and ready for the next stage in their education. *"Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn."* ~ O. Fred Donaldson, Ph.D., play researcher

In KS2 (Sycamore & Maple), our classes are organised with two year groups in each. This enables us to teach children of similar development and maturity together within classes that have a manageable ability spread. We do not integrate a play-based curriculum into these classes as we teach subjects discreetly. We do, though, utilise cross-curricular links where these are appropriate so that pupils have a clear context for their learning. Where links are not appropriate, we will not contrive these but will teach subjects in isolation. We will supplement our teaching with first-hand experience through visits or visitors, and will integrate enhancement opportunities such as learning outside the classroom.

### **How this works**

#### **EYFS & KS1**

Teachers will plan a theme for learning that is taken from our long-term plan. This draws subjects together and ensures that children in KS1 have coverage of the full curriculum. Subjects will be taught in discreet lessons. During lessons, teachers often begin with a whole-class introduction. They will introduce pupils to the context of the learning and will deliver new knowledge (substantive concepts). EYFS children may take part in some, or all, of this introduction as it will inspire their learning through play. At an appropriate point, they will leave to engage in continuous provision.

As pupils move to an activity part of the lesson, they will often be guided by an adult. They might be taught in a group or be given an independent task. This gives them the opportunity to embed their knowledge and practise their skills (disciplinary knowledge). They may be taught in separate age groups in order to ensure that they receive the right curriculum for them. The location of the task will be dictated by its nature, and this may happen at formal tables in the hall or classroom, or on the carpet area, or outdoors.

We value the provision of play for all our children. *"Learning teaches us what is known, play makes it possible for new things to be learned. There are many concepts and skills that can only be learned through play."* (David Elkind). We have therefore established areas of play-based provision in the classroom that are present all the time. These have provocations and challenges that are linked to the learning themes. EYFS children have the freedom to explore these and direct the learning in ways that they want to explore throughout the day. Adults will guide, provoke and question them to move their learning on. Children in Year 1 and Year 2 will also access these learning areas, although their time will be more limited as a result of the direct teaching they receive in other phases of the



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lesson. When they access learning areas, they will have challenges and extensions that they are expected to address, because their play should be at a higher level than children in EYFS. Again, adults will interact with pupils to ensure that play is appropriate.

We organise learning in this way in order to enable pupils to practise disciplinary knowledge and move their learning into long-term memory. They also learn essential learning skills, including independence and socialisation, and the opportunity to use and rehearse essential vocabulary.

### **KS2**

Lessons in KS2 follow our 2-year rolling programme. This ensures that children learn new substantive knowledge each year. Lessons might have some repetition of previous knowledge in order to build knowledge in long-term memory, but on the whole pupils will encounter new knowledge. They may be introduced to the concept together, regardless of age, during the introductory section of the lesson. They will then have an activity that is aimed at their own age or stage, which may be independent or led by an adult. Tasks will build disciplinary knowledge at the level that is right for the child, and different groups may have different tasks.

Where it is clear that substantive knowledge needs to be taught separately to different year groups (for example, in maths), this will be organised into age groups. The lesson generally involves one group being taught by the teacher whilst the other has an appropriate and relevant age-related independent task. The groups will then swap.

### **Impact**

Our curriculum in EYFS and KS1 is complex. It demands the skill of the teacher and other adults to ensure learning moves on at the correct pace, and the full curriculum is covered. The blend of learning involving both direct teaching and play ensures that children learn effectively in a comfortable and familiar environment. They learn and practise skills and knowledge in ways that ensures that they are successful in KS2. The success of our curriculum can be measured in limited issues arising from transition because children are ready for the next steps in their learning. They demonstrate that they are effective learners and have the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful. This is why our outcomes at KS2 are so strong; our pupils are successful learners and could not achieve highly without solid knowledge and firm foundations. We also know that our children are confident individuals who also appreciate others and can work co-operatively. This is because they develop highly-attuned social skills during play.