

Dame Catherine Harpur's School Curriculum



At Dame Catherine's we have developed our own curriculum. We listen to ideas suggested by our children and families in developing our curriculum, ensuring that we provide engaging activities which capture the interest of our children. For example by asking the children what knowledge, understanding and skills they already have around a theme or question, asking for their ideas about what they would like to learn and asking for ways in which parents might support, we can build on prior learning, share strengths and develop a real sense of ownership for our children.

We have adapted the National Curriculum to provide a richer and more thorough educational environment for our pupils whilst ensuring that the school's philosophy is not compromised. Recognising the importance of transition for children, for the core subjects of English and Maths, we keep in line with the National Curriculum, but in our own way. For English we feel that it is important to emphasise interaction in speaking. Discussion and debate are certainly a strength at our school and there is plenty of good quality time spent on reading. We are fortunate in having an excellent library of books and often get donations.

Our leadership has a clear focus in ensuring that we have a wide range of expertise, despite being a small school. As we have a greater capacity for flexibility and a better staffing ratio than other schools, our aim is to develop our curriculum opportunities so that children benefit from these specialisms. This is especially useful for our older children. These specialisms include music, languages and our own form of forest school within our unique environment. Our school ensures that it provides the broad provision it needs to for children on roll at our school using our expertise, with staff who are well-trained in specific areas as well as core subjects such as English, maths and science. For children who flexi-school, it is our responsibility to ensure that they have a balanced curriculum, so we will need to discuss with individual families how this will work. We understand and respect the fact that our part-time children access some subjects at home or through other home-school groups and therefore they need to know what to expect in terms of 'diet' when their children join us on specific days. Our termly overviews which centre around a broad challenge question provide context for families and an idea of whether certain subjects might be taught on certain days.

We have a delicate balance between flexibility to allow for in the moment opportunities (known as 'off-piste' at Dame Catherine's) and continuity for groups of children. There is a general aim for some subjects to be taught on a specific day most of the time. Equally, to ensure that we have a full breadth, there is a cross-curricular approach, and one where we might focus more in depth on a particular subject or group of subjects for a specific amount of time. Themed days are popular and allow us to learn together across the school.

We are currently finalising our coverage and progression documents for each subject, which are extensive documents outlining our vision for each subject and the knowledge, understanding and skills we intend to cover over time. These also outline the themes chosen over several years. These will be on our website, along with the termly curriculum overviews.

Below is a little information about our wider curriculum subjects.

Science: this subject focuses heavily on investigational skills and working scientifically. We are keen to take our science learning outside where possible too. Whilst we ensure that we cover the content in the national Curriculum, we don't tie ourselves to this exclusively as there are so many more fascinating areas to

explore. Our children love to ask questions, so this takes us into many different areas of learning. Making a non-Newtonian glow in the dark fluid from potatoes, cooking on a home-made solar cooker, inflating balloons using popping candy, creating a tornado in a bottle – there are hours of fun to be had when learning science with us.



Languages

We know from talking to many families, that children learning languages is important to them and a number of children in school are fortunate in being able to communicate in more than one language. We have staff who have a degree in modern languages. Children will experience a range of language learning opportunities during their primary education at Dame Catherine's. We provide further opportunities for them to learn and explore other languages and cultures through our wider curriculum as well as having the opportunity to focus on one or two specific languages.

All children in school currently learn Spanish, including our 3-4 year olds who love their songs and games in Spanish. Our 7-11 year olds have also learnt German over the past 2 years and are continuing to do so. The nature of language learning is that there will be other opportunities in our specific curriculum questions, so children who aren't in school every day will gain some access to some language learning. For example, we will continue to integrate French into some curriculum challenges with our older children.

Music, drama and performance are important to us at Dame Catherine's. Several of our staff play instruments and we have recently started to create small groups and bands so that the children can enjoy performing with us. We have some children who learn instruments outside of school, and we are keen to develop opportunities for them to play, as well as provide some opportunities within school to experience learning an instrument.

We have the skills in school to teach keyboard / piano, trumpet or cornet, flute, saxophone, euphonium. We are currently providing keyboard sessions to 7-11 year olds as part of our music curriculum.



We provide a lot of opportunities for children to develop their acting skills, and are lucky to have Chris, who has an immense talent for script writing. Our unique films incorporate the children's interests and talents. We recognise how important it is to our parents that we know their children well and that we develop our learning around their strengths and interests. Projects such as the films give our children an opportunity to 'have a go' in a low-risk environment where they feel at home and to take risks and develop their skills in whatever way they choose. We are all proud to see how much the children have developed in confidence throughout this experience. These certainly don't replace live performances but recent times have taught us that finding 'a different way' brings its own rewards. "

Outdoor learning and environmental science



This is a common interest for families to explore especially amongst our younger age groups. As a school, children spend a significant part of a week outside. This is through our playtimes which are a good length and which provide children with a good range of resources to access in their play. We have been developing our space outside of the classrooms over the past month and this is still ongoing. Staffing we have in place means that the continuous provision on offer for our younger children will incorporate activities outside. The easy access to outside for ALL groups means that we frequently use the outdoor space for learning across all subjects.

We run specific sessions within our curriculum which are aligned to the forest school principles. As a school we were Forest School accredited 3 years ago. We like to make the best use of our outdoor provision and have plans underway to further develop the spaces at the top of the garden so that they enable us to do this. To be hands-on in a natural environment is something which is important to our school. Forest schools were largely established to support children to develop confidence and self-esteem through this learning. For us, developing the confidence of our children is at the centre of all we do, so our school approaches to learning outdoors are not an 'add on' but integral to our learning at Dame Catherine's and in alignment with all areas of our curriculum. Elly's degree is in environmental science and Maddie has a specialism in technology, which is allowing us to re-develop this area of the curriculum in a way which best fits the children at our school



History, geography, RE, design technology, art and PE

Chris has contributed a lot to making our history curriculum a real strength. We incorporate opportunities to role play, explore artifacts and debate. We feel that it is crucial for children in primary school to be exposed to a full breadth of historical periods, which include world history as well as local and UK history. We incorporate National Curriculum history content into our curriculum at Dame Catherine's but we also focus on modern history to a far greater extent than the National Curriculum. The more children know about the past the better prepared they will be for the future because by remembering the past - they will grow to realise that they are responsible for building a legacy for the generations that follow them. As the national curriculum is rather narrow, we write our own history curriculum.

Similar is true for geography. For example, our coverage of areas of the world is broader than might be the case in some schools. We link education for social responsibility into much of our work in geography.





Design technology and art is often done through projects and we make the most of school visits to help us to broaden opportunities. For example, children have been to a pottery museum and workshop, visited the MAD museum in Stratford and taken part in a DT focused day at Cromford Mills. We provide a lot of opportunities for cooking in school and have some staff which are particularly interested in this area. We even managed to produce our own 'Save the Planet' cookbook recently. With Maddie's help we are keen to develop areas of DT including textiles this year and Josh joining our school brings lots of expertise with art.



As children get older, we have asked Chris to lead on the PE. He has taught PE in other schools and has qualifications in martial arts. Bria also supports the development of PE in certain areas such as netball and dance, and she has run dance clubs in the past. We provide weekly PE sessions led by our own staff in the village hall or outside. We have access to a very large sports ground which is 3 minutes walk away from us.

We embed Social Moral Spiritual and Cultural provision and PSHE in our curriculum. RE is also integrated into the curriculum to enable the children to support children learning about a wide range of faiths and beliefs and in context.

We have a small number of laptops and ipads in school which are used to support learning. As children move to the older class, they become involved with video editing projects and we regularly use green screening. Children become familiar with WeVideo to edit their own videos.