Mugginton Church of England Primary School

**2021 – 2022 Curriculum Statement**

Our curriculum design is rooted in three simple questions:

*‘What is a Primary School for?’*

*‘What does Mugginton CE Primary offer which may not be available elsewhere?’*

*‘Why do the knowledge, skills and activities we promote matter to our children?*

A broad answer – perhaps appropriate for all primary schools – is that our curriculum intends to provide children with the knowledge, skills and cultural capital to succeed in education and prepare them for a future in 21st century Britain.

We believe primary schools should not be homogeneous entities. We have worked hard to develop an identity right for us - an identity rooted in the physical aspects of the school: our location (a rural area of Derbyshire), size (62 children, taught in mixed age classes) and the human aspects: our teaching and support staff, our local community, our children and their extended families. By rooting our values in people and place, we give our children a secure base of nurture, love, high expectations, knowledge and rich, meaningful experience ready for the next stage of their lives.

**The Physical Aspects of our School**

Mugginton School was built in 1840, giving us a rich history and tradition to explore. We are close to the Peak District National Park and the nearest city, Derby, is approximately 10 miles away. Staff and parents have attended this school themselves and farming and other rural pursuits are still in evidence on a daily basis. However, there has been considerable change: in the latter half of the twentieth century there were five working farms in Mugginton, now there is one. Our school has increased in number significantly since 2015.

**The Human Aspects of our School**

Roughly half of our staff was born and brought up outside Derbyshire. Our Headteacher is a Londoner whereas our Bursar has lived in the same local village for 20 years. Our Chair of Governors spent most of his working life in South Africa. Approximately two-thirds of our 62 children began their primary career at another school – their families moved them to Mugginton because of what we offer. This apparent contrast: the traditional, rural locality and small school and an openness to change and diverse pupil, parent and teaching body is our greatest strength. Because of this diversity, we are not a ‘typical’ small school. Our children are used to welcoming new friends, regardless of background. Our parent community is equally welcoming – with shop workers, tree surgeons, Farmers, Doctors, Builders, Architects, Carers and Journalists establishing strong bonds. What binds us together is our school and our rural location. Therefore, the outdoors, nature and a love of and respect for animals is a central part of what we do.

**Mugginton’s Unique Offer**

The average state-funded primary school has 282 pupils on roll. Mugginton, therefore, is a special environment. By blurring the traditional educational model of classes (Year One, Year Two etc), we are better able to treat our children as individuals and respond to their distinct needs. A single English lesson may involve input to children from Years One to Five. In short, in every aspect of the curriculum, our children receive education directed toward their unique needs.

Sport, exercise and a love of nature/the outdoors is central to our offer. We provide weekly ‘Forest Friday’ activities and half-termly walks in the Peak District when we are joined by parents. Monty the Mugginton Mutt, our school dog, offers support to children as a non-judgmental friend. He enjoys listening to children read, helping with their learning and offers encouragement and support to children’s wellbeing. We encourage the children to recognise and discuss birds, plants, flowers and trees they come across to develop their appreciation of nature’s beauty. We aim to have the fittest children in the County. Our children join staff and parent-helpers for two 5km runs per week and every child represents our school in a competitive sporting environment at least once each year.

Mugginton is a second family. Our parents have access to and involvement in school life because of our open door policy and transparency. This strong bond has resulted in parental visits from architects, scientists, nurses, vets, engineers and Sky News journalists to give insights into their jobs, inspire children and supplement our curriculum with ‘real life’. Our older children take responsibility for the youngest. They run ‘buddy reading’ sessions; hold children’s hands as they cross the road; prepare and lead half-termly church services and collective worship; help support positive behaviour on the playground and support younger children in Forest Friday sessions. This ‘older sibling’ model encourages the younger children to develop the right behaviours to succeed whilst giving the older children a level of responsibility and opportunity to develop the self-confidence and maturity ready for the next stage of their education.

Our staff have a varied, rich skillset. The Headteacher is a fluent Japanese speaker (Mugginton is the only primary school in the country to offer Japanese language lessons to all children). Two staff members play in music bands; one ran for England as a teenager and one is a keen cyclist. A former pupil’s Mother attended Chetham School of Music and delivers 51 music lessons to children in flute, clarinet and piano. In addition, our governing body has strong links with South Africa and two hold PhDs in science and mathematics. Using this body of skills is central to our curriculum.

**The Knowledge, Skills & Activities we Promote**

Our curriculum aims to secure the core knowledge, skills, appreciation of reading and cultural capital necessary for success. We identified 10 key skills which are promoted throughout the curriculum. Children need the secure base of Mugginton, our fluid and creative curriculum and opportunities to experience the different ways of life they will come across in the future. Developing open-minded, inquisitive children, with a positive mind-set and self-concept is our aim.

Subject-learning can become atomised. We believe it important to emphasise the inter-connectedness of ideas and encourage children to use/build on prior learning when encountering new topics. Learning is split into three blocks. Each contains ten weeks learning and allows additional curriculum time for visits from parents/specialists, trips and subject-specific days. Learning is centred around a ‘Big Idea’, often a question. Children are encouraged to make links between their subject-learning and the big idea. For example, ‘How do Animals Help us?’ encourages children to explore the biology of animals and humans; domestication of dogs in the Stone Age; use of animals for inspiration in Stone Age Caves and in the work of artists such as Albrecht Durer and in the music of Saint-Saens. These links are made concrete using a ‘Learning Web’ display in each classroom. Finally, the purpose of learning is made clear to the children by use of a final outcome at the end of each block. This might take the form of an ‘Animal Extravaganza’ when parents and the local community are invited in to school to share what we have learned through presentations from the children, the use of ICT and pet visits.

**Constrained & Unconstrained Skills**

We make a deliberately simple distinction between knowledge (things we know) and skills (things we do). At a deeper level, we make a distinction between Constrained and Unconstrained skills. Constrained Skills refer to finite, quantifiable skills which can be mastered in a relatively short time such as times tables, alphabetic & phonemic knowledge. Unconstrained Skills are ‘meaning based’. They are difficult to quantify and cannot be mastered in a short period. Inference, comprehension, critical thinking and abstract mathematics are examples of Unconstrained Skills. It is easy to focus too greatly on constrained skill development. Constrained skills are necessary but not sufficient for literacy development, deep mathematical understanding and the empathy and cultural capital necessary to succeed. Therefore, the early years contains systematic, rigorous phonics teaching because this constrained skill is necessary for children to develop deeper unconstrained skills of comprehension and vocabulary. More open tasks are set for older children. Once all school activities are considered, focussed learning time is only four hours a day. This time is our core focus. Excellent academic outcomes will always be a priority. A varied and exciting curriculum promotes excellent outcomes.

The Headteacher is firmly of the opinion that leaders must empower staff to experiment, share, research and feel trusted. Staff must understand they are skilled professionals capable of a continually outstanding curriculum which upholds the high standards required by the Department for Education and the County Council.