



THURLSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Strong Foundations – The First Years of School

At Thurlstone Primary School, we are committed to building the strongest possible foundations for our youngest learners. Our aim is to narrow any educational disadvantage from the moment children join us. We know that early identification of need, timely intervention and high-quality support are essential in helping children make a smooth transition into Key Stage 1 and beyond so that pupils leave us as **empathetic, resilient, driven, aware, respectful and independent** learners. Building strong relationships and communication and interaction is our core principle and at the heart of everything that we do.

This document outlines the curriculum, support strategies and high-quality teaching approaches we have in place to ensure every child makes an excellent start to their learning journey. Our most vulnerable pupils are identified early and support is put in to place when needed.

Curriculum

Our Early Years curriculum is carefully designed to build on the experiences children bring with them, using their cultural capital and mirrors of their lives as a starting point. From there, we extend their knowledge and open windows into the wider world.

The **sequence of learning is mapped with precision** so that children develop a secure understanding of key concepts and vocabulary. Opportunities to revisit and link learning ensure that knowledge is deeply embedded as children transition in to Year 1.

The Year 1 curriculum has been mapped out carefully so children have an opportunity to revisit learning from EYFS alongside being taught new concepts which meet the needs of the National Curriculum.

Literacy and Oracy (Communication and Language)

High-quality texts sit at the heart of our Early Years, Year 1 and Year 2 curriculum. Children revisit these core books regularly, giving them a secure understanding of story structure while supporting the development of vocabulary, comprehension and early reading and writing skills.

During Reception, children take part in **'Story, Rhyme and Listening Time'** where children develop their oracy skills and love of language.

In Reception and Year 1, children experience **stories** through English sessions which run daily. These sessions support comprehension, phonics, transcription skills and imaginative thinking as children innovate and develop their own ideas and share a love of reading.

We further develop children's enjoyment of language through **songs, nursery rhymes and a set of core poems** which are then built on through our wider school Oracy strategy.

As children transition in to Year 2, the focus shifts to developing fluency in reading as we build towards automaticity and comprehension. Children are exposed to a wide range of texts within whole class reading lessons (both extracts and whole books), writing lessons and lessons across the curriculum. Key vocabulary



is continued to be taught alongside developing children's spoken language through the use of sentence stems. Poems are carefully mapped out and reading lessons support developing knowledge of the wider world.

We are a **Read Write Inc** school, and all staff undertake ongoing CPD through portal training and coaching, to ensure consistently high-quality phonics teaching from Reception to Year 2 but also in to Key Stage Two for those children who require additional support. On day one, in Reception, children begin to follow the 'Making a Strong Start' document which teaches phonics from the very beginning to the whole class. We regularly check and regroup children to ensure they are taught at the right stage across Key Stage 1.

Handwriting is taught both within RWI and as a separate session from FS2 onward. We have a whole school progression map to ensure consistency and precision. An emphasis is also placed on developing children's gross motor skills through climbing, large scale movements, heavy work and playing with blocks, tyres and crates.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)

PSED is a central part of learning at Thurlstone Primary. Staff **use high-quality interactions and commentary** to support children's development, alongside an engaging provision that promotes independence and problem-solving. We focus on supporting life skills such as dressing, putting on coats, putting on gloves, buttons and zips as well as supporting with toileting, hand washing and eating.

Children are taught PSED directly through the **weekly myHappymind** programme from FS2: this is in addition to the 'caught curriculum' through daily interactions.

Where needed, children receive dedicated '**special time**' with a key adult to further support their personal and social development. We have a proven track record of helping children settle confidently into our school community.

Mathematics

As an **NCETM** school, we follow a mastery approach that develops strong foundations in number and pattern from the start of Reception and throughout school. The curriculum is clearly sequenced, with targeted repetition to embed early concepts. Children with emerging needs receive daily additional support.

Representations of number are carefully limited to avoid overloading working memory.

In Reception, we use *Mastery in Number* and follow NCETM approaches such as subitising and sentence stems to secure early number understanding.

Our continuous provision includes freely accessible mathematical resources that support number, spatial reasoning and problem-solving. Staff highlight mathematical opportunities across all areas of the indoor and outdoor environment.



Knowledge and Understanding of the World

This curriculum area builds on children's cultural capital and lived experiences before extending their understanding of past and present, people and communities, and the natural world.

Vocabulary and sequencing are mapped across all Early Years elements and used to inform transition into Year 1 so that key knowledge can be revisited and built upon. Within Year 1 and in to Year 2, children are taught the **'Bespoke' History and Geography curriculum** which has been clearly sequenced by the school to build knowledge and vocabulary over time. Through **regular retrieval practice**, children are able to recall their previous learning and build their knowledge over time.

We provide ample opportunities through our Science curriculum for children to explore the natural world, have hands on exploration and use our outdoor area. Seasonal change, learning about the weather, gardening, planting and bug hunting are just a few examples of the opportunities we provide.

Expressive Arts and Design

Skills and associated vocabulary for the expressive arts (including Art and DT) are carefully mapped across the Early Years. Children engage in **directly taught sessions**, followed by opportunities to **practise independently**, in small groups or with adult guidance. For example, a member of staff may support a painting session, junk modelling or construction to develop a particular technique. Children also have access to artistic media on a daily basis within provision where adults skilfully facilitate the use of artistic skills.

Children are introduced to the work of key artists to develop early appreciation and to prepare them for Year 1. Throughout Year 1 and Year 2 and beyond, children are exposed to various key artists and are given the opportunities to practice and improve their skills in drawing, painting, sculpture and design technology.

We provide communication-friendly spaces that promote role-play, oracy and social interaction. Music is taught weekly, with further opportunities for children to explore sound and movement within provision. All of our children are given regular opportunities to perform in front of each other and their parents.

Children who are hesitant to engage in creative activities are carefully supported by their key adults, for example by developing confidence with scissor skills or mark-making.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Formative assessment is used continuously to **identify needs early** and provide timely support. Impact is monitored carefully across the key stage through regular pupil progress meetings and ongoing discussions between school leaders.

Vulnerable pupils are closely tracked from the very start of school and throughout and allocated key-worker 'special time' to deepen understanding of their needs and ensure support is well matched.

Where speech and language needs are identified, these are discussed with parents and referred to SALT. Our Year 2 teacher is also the SENDCo.



Our provision is carefully planned to build on taught learning and develop executive function skills such as reasoning, problem-solving, persistence and collaboration. We also create spaces that promote communication and social development.

Routines and expectations are clear across the key stage, to reduce cognitive load and ensure children can focus on learning. Consistent language and structures are used across the curriculum and from one-year group to the next.

Learning is planned to build recall of key vocabulary and knowledge, with frequent revisits to secure understanding. Knowledge organisers are shared with parents to support shared language and reinforcement at home.

Staff receive targeted training and in-the-moment coaching to strengthen Early Years pedagogy.

Linked Policies

- Early Years
- Literacy
- Maths

Linked Documents

- Early Years Curriculum Plans – within whole school documentation
- Whole School Curriculum Map
- Early Years Foundation Subject Knowledge Organisers
- Whole School Knowledge Organisers (Year 1 and Year 2 specifically).