

## **The Highters Heath Strands**

At Highters Heath, we have identified 5 specific strands that are of key importance to the development of the pupils here. These strands run throughout the curriculum, and are used by the teachers both formally and informally.

### **Strand 1: Academic Learning**

The academic success of all children, so that all pupils make progress from their own starting points, is the cornerstone of every school. We ensure that the National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled and accessed by the pupils in relevant and approachable ways. The core subjects are taught, not only in isolation so that specific skills are acquired, but also run throughout our Topic work. This ensures that pupils develop their knowledge of reading, writing, maths and computing, and that they apply their knowledge within a variety of contexts.

### **Strand 2: Awareness and Understanding of Ourselves and Others**

Many pupils in our school require emotional support and stability. For those pupils who have experienced on-going challenges at home, sympathy, empathy and positive self-esteem may need to be built-upon and nurtured. We value the importance of our children's mental health, and ensure that throughout all subjects, these qualities (as well as many others such as resilience, perseverance etc) are spoken about and deemed as important. At Highters Heath, we respect equality regardless of gender, sexual preference, religion or culture, and promote these values. We regularly consider the impact of our actions on others, and our learning mentor is available to support those pupils who may require 1:1 or small group assistance as well. Our restorative justice, our regular 'check-in's' and 'treasure words' combine to ensure that this strand is an important feature of the culture of our school.

### **Strand 3: Our Place in the World, and The Impact We Have On It**

In order to understand the importance of our own actions, and to be a responsible citizen, we all need to understand both where we live in the world (from a local, national and world perspective), how our culture has evolved and what threatens our way of life. These fundamental principles are taught at Highters Heath through various history and geography units, as well as nurturing an understanding of individuals who have had a major impact on the world in areas such as science, politics and racial discrimination. Through these lessons, we encourage the pupils to consider their own actions and how they, as individuals or as a class may affect others. We also foster this culture by electing a school council, and having a jobs board. These integral elements of the school encourage the pupils to be responsible and to have a direct impact upon school life. This has been designed specifically for our pupils, who may not have a working adult at home as a role model, or who may underestimate their own achievements and potential.

#### **Strand 4: Expression and Communication**

Many pupils at Highters Heath enter our school with a low level of communication and language. With this in mind, we believe that a curriculum that develops the ability of the pupils to express themselves in positive ways, enables our pupils to achieve better, to have positive relationships and to see themselves in a positive light. Creativity is crucial element of ensuring mental well-being, and therefore our music, art, drama and fictional writing are of great importance. Our learning mentor often works with pupils on a 1:1 level to help pupils to express themselves effectively, and to understand how other pupils communicate with them. This is achieved through activities such as: role-play, art, reading relevant books together and restorative justice conferences. Within lessons, the explicit teaching of vocabulary is taught through various methods including the 6-step approach. This explicit teaching of specific words is an approach used in all lessons, but particularly during reading and English lessons.

#### **Strand 5: Characteristics of an Effective Learner**

In order to become independent learners, our pupils need an understanding of both what it requires for you to be able to learn, and the ways in which you as an individual work best. To this end, we are aware of the importance of developing an understanding of metacognition, and we address this through a reflective approach to teaching, learning and responding to social situations. We use the 'Building Learning Power' approach, and make explicit the qualities which allow you to learn. We reward pupils who demonstrate these qualities (which we call 'treasure words'), by awarding them with a medal during a weekly assembly.