INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Summer Term Curriculum Update 2025



Research Spotlight:
Why We're Rethinking Learning

The world is changing—education should too

Children today are growing up in a world that's fast-paced, digitally connected and constantly evolving. According to the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 report, schools must shift from simply delivering knowledge to helping children develop the skills, values and understanding they need to navigate complexity, collaborate with others and shape a better future.

Busy doesn't always mean better

Research in child development (Mental Health Foundation, 2021) shows that children today face increased pressure and stress, along with fewer opportunities for unstructured, creative thinking. By slowing the pace of learning and creating space to revisit and explore ideas, we're supporting children's ability to focus, process and make deeper connections in their learning.

Curriculum and Learning

Over the past year, we've taken a step back and asked ourselves a big question: Is school still working—for every child? While we're proud of what we already do well, we also recognise that the world our children are growing up in is changing fast. We want to make sure that our curriculum not only keeps pace with those changes but actively prepares our children for the future. That's why we've been rethinking what learning should look and feel like—drawing on your feedback, the children's voices and the latest educational research.



This summer term, we're trialling a new curriculum across the federation—designed by our team, for our children. It builds on our strengths, reflects how children learn best and puts them right at the centre of their own learning journey.

Why Change?

Recent surveys and feedback have highlighted how important it is for learning to feel meaningful, enjoyable and connected to real life. Many shared the value of giving children more time to explore, collaborate and apply what they've learned through practical experiences. We also know that school days can feel busy and fast-paced, which sometimes makes it harder for children to pause, reflect or fully absorb their learning. Our new approach aims to create more space for just that—slowing things down to allow ideas to settle and understanding to deepen.

Rather than rushing from one lesson to the next, we're giving children the time and freedom to think, question, revisit and create. We want their learning to spark curiosity, grow confidence and help them flourish as capable, thoughtful individuals.



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT:
Why this matters?

Our new curriculum is grounded in what research tells us about how children learn best:

Creativity needs space to grow

A well-known NASA study found that 98% of 4–5-year-olds scored at 'genius level' for creative thinking. By age 10, this dropped to 30%, and by adulthood, just 2%. The study suggests creativity doesn't disappear—it's often squeezed out by rigid routines and systems. We're trialling a curriculum that gives children the space to imagine, problem-solve and think differently, helping creativity thrive across all areas of learning.

Learning sticks when it's meaningful

Cognitive science shows that memory is strengthened when children are actively engaged in their thinking. Project-based learning, spaced repetition and real-world applications help children understand and remember more over time (Willingham, 2009; Rosenshine, 2012).

Skills for life, not just tests

Research from the OECD and Education Endowment Foundation highlights the long-term value of skills like teamwork, independence, resilience and problem-solving. These aren't easily taught through worksheets—they're developed through rich, collaborative experiences that are at the heart of our new approach.

This isn't just about changing what we teach—it's about rethinking how we prepare children for whatever comes next.



ROOTED IN RESEARCH, SHAPED BY PURPOSE

This refreshed approach to teaching is grounded in strong pedagogy and informed by research into how children learn best. But more than that, it reflects what children need now—and what will prepare them for the world ahead.

Each term, learning is brought to life through purposeful, project-based work. These projects are linked to the national curriculum but explored through real-world themes and challenges, helping children see the meaning and value behind what they're learning.

We're also introducing three exciting curriculum pathways:

- Core Career Pathway – connecting learning to real jobs and industries
- Core Connection Pathway – nurturing key personal and life skills
- Core Learning and Supported Pathway – ensuring access and success for every child





CORE CONNECTIONS

Helping Children Grow as Learners and People

Our curriculum is about more than just knowledge—it's also about the kind of people we want our children to become. At the heart of every project are six essential life skills that support both learning and personal growth:

- Citizenship – Understanding fairness, respect and their role in society
- Independence – Taking ownership of learning and making decisions
- Collaboration – Working with others and valuing teamwork
- Creativity – Thinking differently, exploring ideas and solving problems
- Advocacy – Speaking up and making a difference
- Wellbeing – Looking after their own physical and emotional health

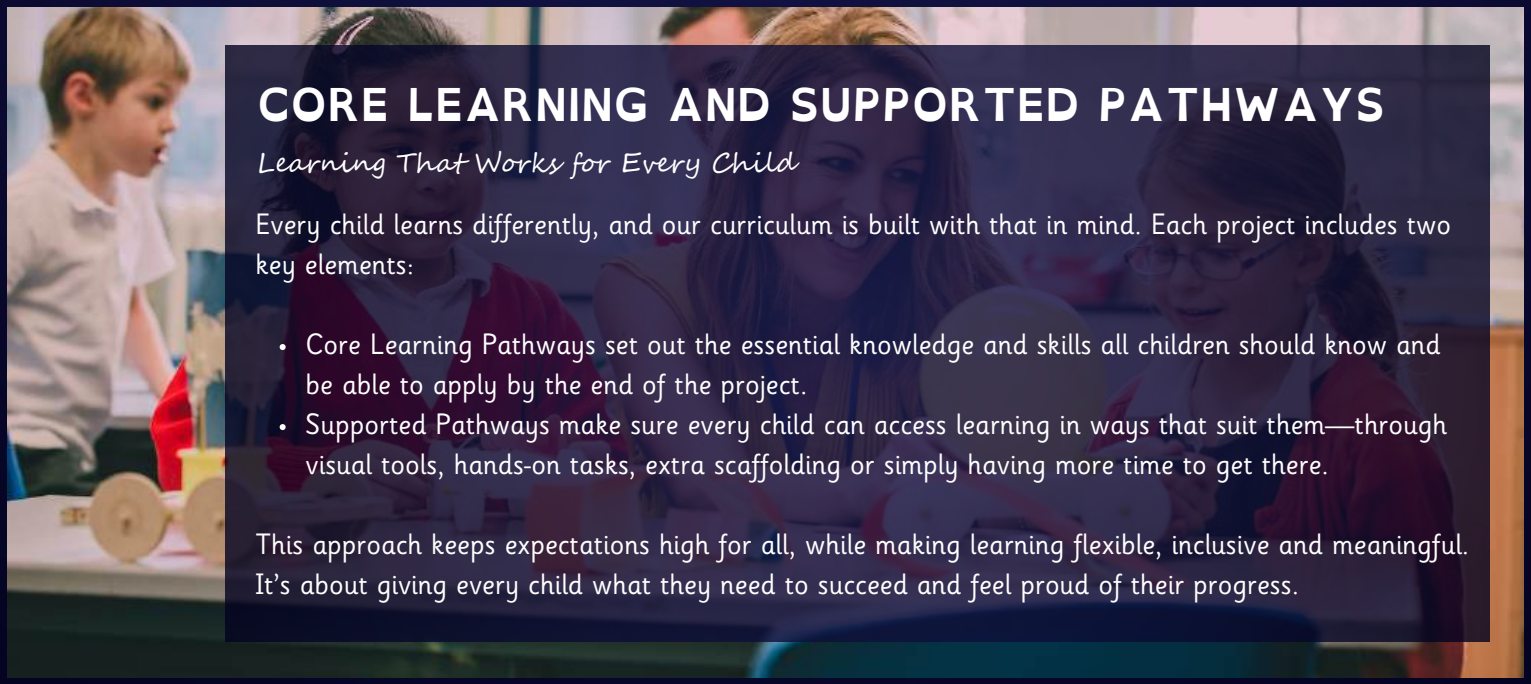


CORE CAREER PATHWAYS

Giving Learning Real Purpose

In every project, children will explore a broad career area—from science and sustainability to the arts, social justice, skilled trades and public service. These aren't just jobs to learn about—they're windows into the world, helping children understand how their learning connects to real life.

Whether they're becoming young engineers by designing sustainable homes or stepping into the role of a journalist to report on local events, children will build skills that go far beyond the classroom—teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and resilience. It's about showing children what's possible and helping them find their place in a world full of opportunity.



CORE LEARNING AND SUPPORTED PATHWAYS

Learning That Works for Every Child

Every child learns differently, and our curriculum is built with that in mind. Each project includes two key elements:

- Core Learning Pathways set out the essential knowledge and skills all children should know and be able to apply by the end of the project.
- Supported Pathways make sure every child can access learning in ways that suit them—through visual tools, hands-on tasks, extra scaffolding or simply having more time to get there.

This approach keeps expectations high for all, while making learning flexible, inclusive and meaningful. It's about giving every child what they need to succeed and feel proud of their progress.



How Our Projects Work:
Where Learning Comes to Life

Each of our curriculum projects runs over three weeks, offering children time to explore, revisit and apply what they've learned in meaningful ways. Rather than rushing from one subject to the next, our approach gives space for knowledge and skills to build gradually, allowing ideas to settle and understanding to deepen.

Projects are designed to feel purposeful and connected to real life. Each one is linked to a broad theme or career area, helping children see how what they're learning in school relates to the world around them. Over time, key knowledge and skills are woven through different projects, giving children the chance to revisit ideas from new angles and use them in different contexts. This repeated exposure—sometimes called a spiral approach—helps make learning more memorable and flexible.

Whether children are designing, building, presenting, solving or reflecting, every project is an opportunity to combine creativity with critical thinking. It's a way of learning that brings subjects together, connects to real-world ideas and gives children the confidence to ask questions, take risks and think for themselves.

Research Spotlight:
The Power of Project-Based Learning



Project-Based Learning (PBL) is more than just a method — it's a mindset. It shifts the focus from simply covering content to deeply exploring ideas through meaningful, real-world tasks.

John Dewey (1938) argued that learning should be grounded in real-life experience. He believed children are more motivated when they understand why they are learning something and how it applies to the world around them. Our curriculum is built on this idea — each project connects learning to real-world themes and careers, helping children see its value and purpose.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) supports this approach, showing that learning is most powerful when children move through a cycle of doing, reflecting, thinking and applying. This cycle underpins our three-week projects — children discover something new, develop it through practice, then apply it to a real-world challenge.

Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and OECD also shows that PBL supports the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and communication — all vital for the future. When children work on rich, purposeful tasks, they not only gain knowledge but build the kind of skills that last a lifetime.

LEARNING LOOPS

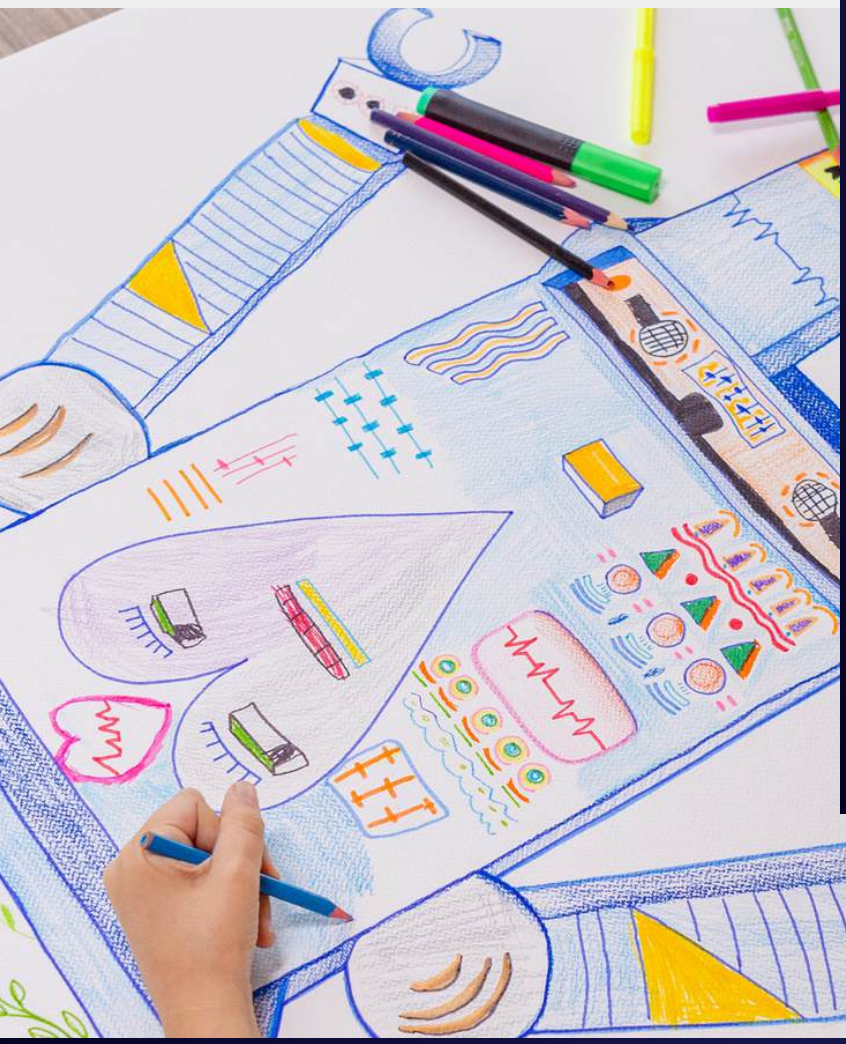
How We Structure Learning for Depth and Retention

Instead of covering a topic once and then moving straight on, we're using a new approach called Learning Loops—designed around how children's memory and understanding develop best over time.

Each project follows a three-week cycle:

In Week 1 – Aspire, children explore new ideas in an exciting, hands-on way with plenty of support and guidance.
In Week 2 – Improve, they build on this knowledge through problem-solving, collaboration and practice.
In Week 3 – Master, they apply what they've learned to a real-world task or challenge, showing their understanding in meaningful ways.

This approach is rooted in research from cognitive science and education, which tells us that children learn more effectively when they revisit ideas, practise in different contexts and have the chance to use their learning for a purpose. By returning to key knowledge and skills across different projects, children deepen their understanding, grow in confidence and see how everything connects.



Research Spotlight:

Why Learning Loops Work



Learning sticks when it's spaced and repeated

Cognitive science tells us that we remember things better when we come back to them over time. This is called spaced learning—and it's backed by studies like those by Willingham (2009) and Roediger & Butler (2011), who found that revisiting ideas helps children move knowledge into long-term memory. That's why our Learning Loops are built around cycles of learning, practising and applying—so nothing is rushed, and understanding has time to grow.

Memory improves when we recall and use knowledge

Instead of just hearing something once, children need time to retrieve and use what they've learned. This boosts confidence and helps ideas stick. Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction highlight how important it is for children to practise key skills regularly and apply them in different ways—and that's exactly what our Improve and Master weeks are for.

Learning should move from support to independence

Our approach follows the 'I do, we do, you do' model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), which gradually builds children's independence. Teachers introduce and model (Aspire), guide and support practice (Improve), then step back so children can apply what they know (Master). This structure helps children gain confidence while still being challenged.

Real understanding takes time to develop

Rather than rushing through content, the Learning Loop gives children time to think deeply, connect ideas and use what they've learned in meaningful ways. This reflects Bruner's spiral curriculum, where learning is revisited and expanded each time with new understanding and depth.

By using Learning Loops, we're helping children move from surface-level knowledge to real, lasting understanding—at a pace that supports success for everyone.

FROM BEAN TO BAR

What does it take to make a bar of chocolate?

Chocolate is a treat loved by millions, but behind every bar is a fascinating journey of nature, science, trade and production. This project takes children on an exploration of chocolate's entire journey—from the role of insects in cacao farming to how chocolate is processed, sold and enjoyed worldwide. Children will investigate the science behind chocolate, the environmental impact of its production and the ethical challenges within the industry. The project will conclude with a whole-school authentic outcome, where children will share their knowledge and showcase chocolate-based products they have created.

KS1



Chocolate Journey

Children will become Young Cacao Farmers, exploring the origins of chocolate and the journey from bean to bar. Through hands-on activities, they will discover how cacao trees grow, what they need to survive, and how farmers harvest the beans. They will investigate the role of bees and other pollinators, create chocolate maps, and explore the textures and smells of cacao. By working together to build their own 'chocolate farms' in role-play areas, children will develop their understanding of where food comes from while building teamwork and curiosity about the wider world.

KS2: Project 1

Children will become Food Scientists, investigating the secrets behind chocolate's smooth, melt-in-the-mouth texture. Through experiments, they will explore how temperature, ingredients, and mixing techniques affect the taste and texture of chocolate. They will test melting points, experiment with emulsification, and design their own chocolate recipes, adjusting ingredients to create the perfect bar. This project will develop children's scientific thinking and problem-solving skills while encouraging creativity and independence in food design.



The Chocolate Lab

KS2: Project 2

Children will become Ethical Business Owners, uncovering the hidden costs behind the chocolate industry. They will investigate how chocolate is made, from small family farms to large corporations, and explore the impact of fair and unfair trade on farmers, workers, and the environment. Through discussions and debates, they will consider what makes chocolate truly fair and sustainable. Finally, they will design their own ethical chocolate brand, creating packaging and advertising campaigns that promote fairness and sustainability. This project will develop children's sense of responsibility and critical thinking, helping them understand how their choices can make a difference in the world.



Fair and Square

Choco Challenge

- *Find It! – Look at different chocolate bar labels. Where does the cocoa come from? Is it Fairtrade?*
- *Grow It! – Try planting a cacao bean (or another seed) and observe what it needs to grow.*
- *Make It! – Create your own chocolate recipe. What ingredients would you use?*
- *Debate It! – Should all chocolate be Fairtrade? Why or why not?*
- *Test It! – What temperature does chocolate start melting at? Can you find the perfect temperature for smooth chocolate?*

BUZZING ABOUT BIODIVERSITY

What would happen if insects disappeared?

Bees and other pollinators are vital for plants, food and ecosystems, but their numbers are declining. This project challenges children to investigate why pollinators are so important and what we can do to protect them. Through research, hands-on activities and environmental action, they will transform part of the school into a wildlife haven that supports bees, butterflies and other creatures. This project does more than teach children about insects—it helps them understand the delicate balance of nature and take real action to support biodiversity.

KS1



Mission Minibeast

Children will become Wildlife Rangers, exploring their school grounds to uncover the hidden world of minibeasts. Through hands-on activities, they will investigate where insects live, how they help nature and what they need to survive. They will build bug hotels, plant flowers for pollinators and work together to create a welcoming habitat for tiny creatures. This project will help children understand the importance of insects in nature while developing their sense of teamwork and responsibility for the environment.

KS2: Project 1

Children will become Pollination Scientists, investigating how bees and other insects help plants grow. They will explore how different flowers attract bees, carry out hands-on experiments to see which plants pollinators prefer and learn why pollination is essential for food production. By planting and caring for a bee-friendly flower patch, they will take real action to support local wildlife while developing independence and responsibility. Through their research, they will also consider the threats facing bees and explore ways to protect them for the future.



To Bee or Not to Bee

KS2: Project 2

Children will take on the role of Landscape Ecologists, designing and creating a pollinator-friendly garden that supports bees, butterflies and other wildlife. They will research which plants provide the best nectar and shelter, explore how different areas of the school grounds can be adapted for nature and consider how human activity impacts local ecosystems. By building features like wildflower meadows, bee hotels and wildlife shelters, they will use creativity and teamwork to transform their school into a thriving habitat where pollinators can flourish.



Bee-spoke Gardening

FUN FACTS

The UK is home to thousands of mini beasts – tiny creatures that wiggle, crawl, fly and scuttle around us. Some are helpful, some are a little bit cheeky, but all of them are important!

Bugs Without Bones!

Mini beasts don't have backbones like we do. Instead, insects wear their skeleton on the outside like a suit of armour! (Very fashionable.)

Woodlice Are Tiny Armadillos!

Ever seen a woodlouse curl into a ball? That's its defence mode – like a mini armadillo hiding from danger!

Buzzing for Honey

A honeybee flaps its wings 200 times per second (try doing that with your arms!). All that buzzing helps them find flowers to sip nectar from.

Bees Dance to Chat!

Honeybees don't text... they dance to tell each other where the best flowers are! It's called the waggle dance – and yes, it's as funny as it sounds.

Super Pollinators

Bees help plants make seeds by spreading pollen. Without bees, we wouldn't have apples, strawberries, or even chocolate! (Yes, CHOCOLATE! We owe them a lot.)

NAVIGATING THE WILD

How do we find our way and survive in the great outdoors?

The ability to navigate, build shelter, find resources and work as a team has been essential for survival throughout human history. In this project, children will develop real-world map-reading, problem-solving and bushcraft skills, learning how people survive and thrive in different environments.Through hands-on outdoor challenges, children will learn to read maps, use a compass, build shelters, create fire and find food and water in the wild. They will study the survival techniques used by explorers, indigenous communities and military teams, developing resilience, independence and confidence in their own abilities.

KS1



Finding Our Way

Children will become Young Explorers, learning the basics of direction, map symbols and simple survival skills. They will take part in treasure hunts and nature trails, learning to follow simple maps and directional clues. They will explore how animals and people find shelter and food in the wild, creating their own mini survival camps using natural materials. Through role-play and outdoor play, they will develop collaboration, as they work together to complete survival challenges, and wellbeing, as they build confidence in outdoor learning.

KS2: Project 1

Children will become Trailblazers, developing essential navigation skills like explorers, adventurers and search-and-rescue teams. They will learn to read maps, use a compass and follow trails, using landmarks, the sun and natural signs to find their way. As they explore different terrains, they will investigate how travellers—from ancient explorers to modern hikers—have navigated unfamiliar landscapes and adapted to challenges. Through orienteering courses and nature-based scavenger hunts, children will build their independence by solving real-world navigation problems.



Into the Wild

KS2: Project 2

Children will take on the role of Survival Experts, learning how to stay safe, think quickly and adapt in extreme outdoor conditions. They will develop advanced bushcraft skills, such as fire-lighting with flint and steel, building strong insulated shelters, knot tying, purifying water and identifying edible plants. They will also explore the mental and physical resilience needed for survival, learning about real-world survivalists and emergency situations where quick thinking and teamwork are essential. They will develop their leadership as they take charge in group survival scenarios and their advocacy as they explore the importance of respecting and protecting nature while using survival skills responsibly.



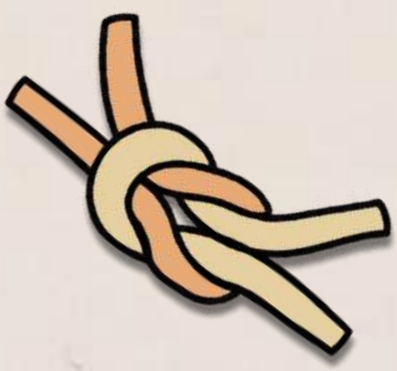
Survival Quest

Knot Know-How

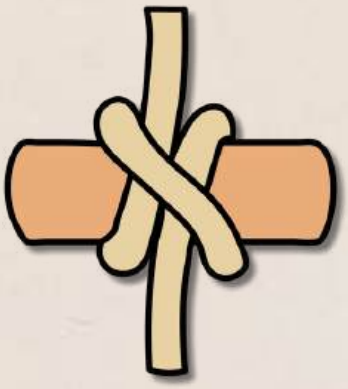
Mastering knots is a key survival skill, helping with shelter-building, securing equipment and even rescuing others. Knowing how to tie the right knot can make all the difference in the wild, whether you're setting up camp, climbing, or keeping supplies safe.

Here are three essential knots every adventurer should know:

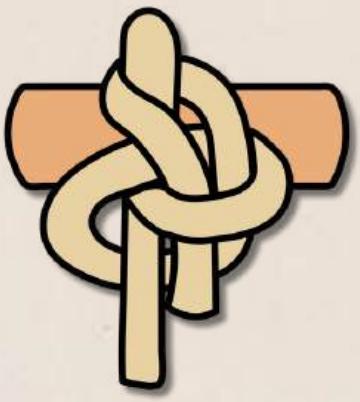
Reef Knot



Clove Hitch



Bowline



Why not try researching how to tie these knots at home?

Challenge yourself to use them in real-life scenarios like securing a tent, tying a bundle or creating a pulley system. How quickly can you master them?

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

How do we bring a story to life on stage?

From ancient storytelling to modern musicals, performance has been a powerful way for people to share ideas, express emotions and entertain. In this project, children will step into the world of theatre, learning how acting, music, costume and stage design work together to create a live production. They will develop the skills needed to put on a show, working as a team to bring a musical performance to life for an audience. This project does more than teach children about theatre—it builds confidence, communication and creativity, showing them how different skills contribute to a shared vision.

KS1



Setting the Scene

Children will become Stage Designers and Prop Makers, creating the world of the performance through scenery, backdrops and props. They will explore different materials, textures and colours, learning how stage design transforms a performance space. Through painting, constructing and crafting, they will design key elements for the show, working together to build an exciting and imaginative stage. This project will develop their teamwork, as they collaborate on props and scenery, and their creativity, as they make artistic choices about colour, pattern and design.

KS2: Project 1

Children will become Character Designers, transforming actors through masks, props and costume elements.They will explore how exaggerated features, bold colours and creative accessories help an audience instantly recognise characters on stage. Through research and hands-on design, they will experiment with cardboard, fabric, paint and paper-mâché to create theatrical character pieces that enhance the performance. This project will develop artistic problem-solving, as children consider how to make designs practical for stage use, and imagination, as they create unique character elements.



Sketch to Stage

KS2: Project 2

Children will become Actors, Directors and Musicians, bringing the script to life through performance. Actors will develop their voices and expressions, learning how movement and facial expressions help tell a story. Directors will take charge of blocking scenes and organising rehearsals, while Musicians will work on songs, sound effects and simple choreography to bring energy to the production. This project will develop confidence, as children take on performance roles, and teamwork, as they rehearse and perform together.



In the Spotlight

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

- *In theatre, saying "Good luck" is bad luck! Instead, actors say "Break a leg!"*
- *The oldest known play was written over 2,500 years ago in Ancient Greece!*
- *The person in charge of the whole show is called the Director, but the Stage Manager keeps everything running smoothly!*
- *Some actors rehearse in front of a mirror to perfect their expressions and gestures.*



