

Horton Lodge Community Special School

‘Working hand in hand to achieve potential’



Curriculum Approach

Approved by:

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Aims, Vision and Values.....	3
3. Legislation and guidance.....	4
4. Roles and responsibilities	4
5. Delivery and organisation.....	5
6. Assessment	7
7. Monitoring Arrangements	7
8. Links with other policies	7



1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive document to share with staff, governors, other professionals and interested stakeholders. For parents we have produced a more user friendly “Curriculum Handbook”.

2. Aims, Vision and Values

“The curriculum at Horton Lodge School (including the delivery of the National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage) is based on the principles of Conductive Education reflecting a holistic approach. Every activity during the pupil's day is seen as an opportunity for learning and as a time to make progress towards achieving a greater degree of independence. It is therefore important that all activities enable pupils to develop, practice and transfer skills across the curriculum”.

January 2022 Conductive Education Policy

Underneath this Conductive Education ethos sits the rest of our curriculum approach which has been designed considering research into best models of practice for children with PMLD, SLD and ASC. This research includes government recommendations, curriculum models in other similar schools (including those rated Outstanding by Ofsted), relevant literature and materials by leading experts in the field as well as advice from specialist consultants who will be working with our staff and children as we move forward on this journey. Findings from this research have been reviewed in line with our school's aims, vision and values to develop the best possible curriculum approaches for all pupils. The starting point of “what we want pupils to learn” is firmly focussed on developing their independence and preparing for their future, enabling them to connect with communities beyond school and achieve in a way that is meaningful and relevant to their future lives. This is developed through staff expertise in analysing the ongoing development of each pupil, understanding their rate of learning and intrinsic motivation and knowledge of the characteristics of their learning difficulties and associated conditions. This also guides us in how to teach every pupil and puts personalised teaching and learning at the centre of our curriculum within the different broad groups or strands of our curriculum.

A tiered, groups or strands model with key areas of learning/domains rather than subjects was originally adopted by Swiss Cottage School (2014) and there has been growing acknowledgement of this as a more relevant curriculum for pupils with the greatest complexity of need compared with an adapted National Curriculum. The Rochford Review stated that

“schools already have the freedom to use any curriculum they feel is appropriate for the needs and requirements of these pupils”
(Rochford Review, 2016, p.20)

Where ‘these pupils’ are defined as those who are not engaged in subject-specific study. Imray and Colley also propose that

“...children with severe or profound learning difficulties will not succeed in the National Curriculum, or indeed, in any curriculum model designed for neuro-typical conventionally developing learners. They will not succeed because they have severe or profound learning difficulties. It is not possible for them to succeed, if they could succeed, they wouldn't have severe or profound learning difficulties”

Imray and Colley, 2017



Use of a range of assessments (including P-scales in the past) has shown use that most of our pupils do not reach the starting points of the National Curriculum. It has always been the case that a huge amount of work in other areas such as independence, communication, physical development and social and emotional needs have been a priority for our pupils as identified by staff and families alike. It is our belief that at Horton Lodge by providing different, specific curriculum approaches matched to the needs of our children along with personalised EHCP and IEP plan, we aim to support our vision of enabling pupils to be successful, independent learners which are equipped for future life.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the DFE's:

- Early Years Foundation Stage;
- National Curriculum;
- SEND Code of Practice;
- Teacher Standards;
- Governance Handbook.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Governing Board

The Governing Board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the Headteacher to account for its implementation.

4.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to and that:

- All elements of the curriculum, and those subjects that the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the individual needs of the pupil are met;
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored and performance managed;
- The schools' procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements;
- The governing body are involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum;
- Provision is in place.

4.3 Teachers and area Leaders

Teachers will adhere to this policy and ensure that:

- There is an appropriate balance between practical, recorded and appropriately communicated activities;
- Planned learning is matched to the identified needs of the individuals;
- Varied teaching styles and strategies are used to enable children to learn;
- Teaching is based on ongoing, assessment and evaluation;



- Planning and preparation are undertaken effectively;
- Consistent approaches are used throughout the school by all staff in the team where appropriate;
- Time and resources are managed efficiently and effectively;
- Technology is used where it enhances the learning experience of the children.
- There are opportunities for the development of children's interests and for the expression of creativity and use of imagination;
- Teaching is planned and delivered within meaningful and purposeful contexts;
- Lead and monitor effectiveness in their whole school subject responsibility areas.

4.3 Support staff

Teaching assistants, professionals and other adults are deployed in a variety of ways to support teaching and learning. They take part in and apply CPD to ensure high quality teaching and learning. They support the delivery of whole class and small groups as well as work with individuals.

5. Delivery and organisation

5.1 The Curriculum

The curriculum is supported by specialist schemes of work e.g. Equals, Sounds of Intent and Routes for Learning as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. Overall, there is a focus on promoting and sustaining independence with an additional focus on what our children need to know. We utilise a three year whole school curriculum topic cycle (Appendix 1) which incorporates:

- Knowledge about themselves & topics of immediate interest (e.g. family, school)
- Knowledge about life beyond their immediate environment (other people, places)
- For some – broader knowledge of National curriculum subjects
- Skills and knowledge to become active and curious, independent and positive citizens.

5.2 Curriculum strands

Due to the diversity of our learners, we have developed six broad strands that the children could be working within. Generally, a child will fit within one of the strands however a teacher may look to another strand for example to provide a higher level of challenge in a certain area. They are:

Early Years Foundation Stage – this is the statutory framework in all early year's settings in England. It has seven main areas of learning, three prime areas being communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development and four specific areas through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

Pre-Formal Curriculum this strand is for those children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and aims to promote communication, interaction and engagements through highly personalised strategies working from each child's unique characteristic and preferences. Children may need to access teaching sequences many, many times to begin to show anticipation, express preferences/dislikes and interact. The children are provided with a range of multi-sensory



opportunities, such as sensory stories, music, creative sessions, sensory room sessions, intensive interaction, Rebound Therapy and hydrotherapy all as part of their personalised timetables.

Informal Curriculum - this strand is for those children who have complex learning difficulties and who are working consistently to the early reaches of the severe learning difficulties spectrum. Our informal curriculum aims to explore different activities and resources and provide more developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for these pupils. It aims to foster communication skills throughout with a flexible approach to developing and building upon interactions as they occur. As such specific learning objectives cannot always be planned for as outcomes as driven by the pupil's ability to engage, and experiences which capture their interests at any given moment. The informal curriculum strand supports experiences within and beyond the school community and sensory needs are addressed for individual children to promote self-regulation and increase engagement.

Semi-Formal Curriculum – this strand is designed for those children with severe learning difficulties who require experiences and opportunities which promote the development of independence, functional skills, communication, emotional well-being and confidence. It is important for these pupils that achievable aspirations for transitioning to their adult lives remain at the heart of the curriculum and time is devoted to ensuring progression of skills throughout school. Within this strand staff will act upon both planned and unplanned situations to develop learning for individual pupils, including opportunities to learn from problems encountered, the chance to practise and apply communication skills in different situations with different people and of course time given to encourage and celebrate independence.

Formal Curriculum – this strand is designed for for those children with general learning difficulties who are working consistently and over time significantly below age related expectations. For these children subject-specific input provides a bridge between the semi-formal strand and that of the National Curriculum whilst taking into account individual learning styles and interests. Skills are taught contextually with functional literacy and numeracy skills being practised and applied to support real life situations eg reading a shopping list and handling money. Our pupils may take many years to consolidate basic concepts and skills and therefore priorities are identified which will best support them in future life.

National Curriculum – for those children who are working within or near to typical age-related expectations who are working in a subject specific arena.

5.3 Multi-agency Connections

We work closely with a range of different health and social care agencies including Speech and Language Therapy, Specialist teachers for the Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, CAMHS (Children and Adults Mental Health Service), Educational Psychologists, our school nurse and linked social workers. Where appropriate joint working ensure that joint goals set for individual children by other agencies can be embedded into their individualised school curriculum.



6. Assessment

The schools approach to assessment is outlined in the school’s assessment policy. We analyse the learning taking place and feed this assessment back into the teaching and learning process through the effective use of Assessment for Learning, The Engagement Model and written observation. Evidence collected is holistic and relates to EHCP and IEP outcomes as well as assessment frameworks that are relevant to the individual. The aim is to ensure that progression against the child’s previous achievements is tracked and that strengths, needs and future learning intentions are identified. Evidence is moderated internally through RAP meetings with the Head Teacher and externally with a variety of moderation partners.

7. Monitoring arrangements

Governors monitor teaching and learning and curriculum coverage through:

- Monitoring visits;
- Subject leader reports;
- Progress reports;
- Staying abreast of curriculum developments.

SLT monitor teaching and learning through:

- Formal and informal learning walks;
- Staff feedback;
- Lesson observations;
- Pupil Progress reviews;
- Evidence reviews;
- Performance management.

Teachers and subject leaders monitor teaching and learning through:

- Leading in planning development;
- Peer observations;
- Professional discussions;
- Learning walks;
- Questionnaires and audits;
- Action plans;
- Resource management.

8. Link to other policies

We recognise the clear link between Teaching and Learning and the following policies. Staff are aware of the need to refer to these policies when appropriate.

Subject specific policies for English, Mathematics, Religious Education, PSHE, SMSC including British Values and RSE.	
Curriculum Overview	Equal Opportunities Policy
Early Year Foundation Stage Policy	Assessment Policy
Behaviour Policy	Conductive Education Policy
Communication (AAC) Policy	SEND Policy
Policy led by Geraldine Fallows	

