

Curriculum Policy

Introduction.

The curriculum is all that we do, say, teach and learn in our school both in class and out, both formally and informally. It defines the experience of our children and the environment in which they learn. Children ‘learn what they live’ all the time, not just in the taught lessons which we teachers plan so diligently for, but during their free time, walking the corridors, playing on the field and eating their lunch, those informal tangents we follow at a whim and through laughter and fun.

As a special school for special children we have a duty to provide a truly special curriculum which supports all to build bridges over barriers and overcome difficulties in learning. We teach our children in unique ways, using skill, empathy, encouragement and ambition; looking outwards to the therapeutic community and the expertise that lies both within and outside of our school.

Our children are unique and require a specialist approach for them to excel, taking into account their personal special needs and adapting our approaches to meet those needs.

Personal development and life skills have equal weighting with the academic needs of our children and we have made a commitment to ‘Learning Outside the Classroom’ and a skills based approach in order to achieve this.

Learning the skills for a happy and prosperous life is at the heart of all that we do and we celebrate the joy of learning and progressing in our achievements. Above all, we put everyone at the centre of their own ‘learning journey’ which will prepare them for life in the 21st century.

This policy outlines the key components of the ‘formal’ curriculum here at Courtlands; how it is organised, planned and reviewed.

Values, Aims and Objectives.

As set out in our school development plan, the main values and aims relating to this policy are:

- We value learning as a right and a joy.
- We value skills such as reflection, communication, independence, resilience problem solving, innovation and compassion as the keys to a successful future.
- We aim to meet the individual learning and developmental needs of all members of the school community, in order that they may meet their full potential.

- We challenge all limiting constraints and provide pupils with educational opportunities that build bridges which overcome their barriers to learning.
- We aim to provide a truly special curriculum experience for all in order that progress is maximised and our pupils are prepared for the 21st century workplace.
- Providing space for sanctuary, reflection and appreciation of the awe and wonder of our natural environment.
- Providing access to diverse, active and exciting learning environments.
- Providing opportunities for celebrating achievements and progress in a whole range of developmental areas.
- Being a school in which all learners can progress on their learning journey through the delivery of a personalised programme which allows every individual to have opportunities for discovery, surprise and delight.
- Welcoming the community to engage in increased collaboration and partnership – providing a wide range of role models.
- Providing access to fully inclusive and supportive pathways for all young people to succeed in the environment best suited to their needs.
- Enhancing curriculum links between ages, stages, subjects, and the community to develop the skills and attitudes necessary to be successful 21st century citizens.

The main objective of this policy is:

To ensure that children to take responsibility for their learning, and make ‘outstanding’ progress, through being provided with a creative environment in which knowledge, understanding and skills are taught together and explicitly, and where personal development is as important as academic development.

To equip the children with the academic skills to have a successful and independent adult life.

To equip children with the social and emotional skills to have a successful and independent adult life.

We will know we are achieving this when the good or outstanding quality of teaching and learning leads to;

- 1) Our children make ‘outstanding’ progress in a range of measures both academic and personal.
- 2) Children take a lead role in directing and evaluating their curriculum with teachers ensuring appropriate National Curriculum and Skills coverage.

Organisation and Planning

There is a strong structure in place to support development of our curriculum. The Head teacher and curriculum leader meet regularly to discuss policy and practise. These discussions are developed by SLT and Subject Leaders. INSET days and staff meeting are regularly allocated for whole school planning and development. Issues and ideas are further developed and discussed in departmental meetings. Subject leaders lead their subjects by monitoring teaching and learning, auditing resources and implementing curriculum policy.

Courtlands school long term plan is a 2 year rolling programme. Each term has a PHSE element; Living in the Wider World, Relationships, Health and Wellbeing. That is core to all planning of English, Mathematics, Science and foundation subjects.

Our short term plans are written on a weekly basis. These set out learning objectives, activities, skills and individual differentiated outcomes.

Lesson structure reflects our whole school approach to behaviour management. This helps children recognise the right to be safe, to be kind and be ready to learn with time dedicated to personal reflection in every lesson (See behaviour policy)

Teachers include objectives and targets taken from their statements, Individual Behaviour Plans, Provision Map, etc in their mid and short term planning to ensure individual needs and skills are met and developed daily as a taught component in all lessons and Intervention time (9.00 – 9.45 daily)

Individual support for children includes; Occupational Therapy, One to one assisted teaching, Speech and Language Therapy, Visual Impairment team, Play and Music therapy, therapeutic Dance and Equine therapy, Theraplay and ELSA. Specialists visit and work with individuals. Exercises and activities are regularly be given to teachers to develop further in class.

Lunchtime and After School clubs are arranged termly and are funded by Pupil Premium money. These opportunities are offered to all pupils or occasionally specific groups of pupils, eg; girls club. These clubs reinforce a range of skills; communication, social, physical, emotional and well being.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

We adopt a range of teaching styles in order to take account of the range of learners in our school. We encourage the pupils to identify what they would like to learn to maximize interest and engagement. We are flexible and adaptable when children want to lead their learning and suggest other routes and ideas within the topic. Children and adults work with others drawing on resources within the school, the local community and the wider community to create a distinctive and exciting curriculum

We use a variety of methods to inform teaching and learning, and to make assessments of individual children's progress.

These include

- Short term plans which include individual objectives and achievements (Assessment for learning opportunities)
- Informal conversation between staff in class and departments
- Taking photographs of pupils and marking work and books
- Learning Journey opportunities which celebrate individual progress and achievements
- B Squared files updated termly on tracking system and data analysed to inform interventions and School Development Plan
- Behaviour Charts that help assess learning of skills, individual targets, review behaviour and help self evaluation and data analysed to inform interventions, Provision mapping and School Development Plan
- Termly reviews; a report to parents/carers that identify objectives and targets that the pupils have been working towards and reports on behaviour, progress and achievements each term
- Provision Mapping which identifies and includes structures, therapies, systems and plans that enable and enhance learning for each child.

The Foundation Stage

The curriculum that we teach in the Foundation Unit meets the requirements set out in the revised Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, and the guidance produced in 2007, and updated in 2012 which sets the standard for learning development and care for children from birth to 5. Our curriculum planning identifies the developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that the children need in order to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS. As a school we recognise that the Foundation Stage set building blocks for children's learning and that it starts the children off on a skills based, thematic approach to learning.

Our school fully supports the principle that young children learn through play both indoors and outdoors, and by engaging spontaneous play as well as in well planned and structured experiences. We are well aware that all children need the support of both the parents and the teachers to make good progress in school. We strive to build positive links with the parents by keeping them informed about how their children are being taught and how well they are progressing through regular termly coffee mornings.

Each term in the Foundation Stage the staff will assess the skills development of each child and record this information in the Foundation Stage Profile. This assessment forms an important part of the future curriculum planning for each child. Staff informally assess the children on a day to day basis through observations, photographs, and information from parents/carers. The E profile is used as the most effective way of monitoring children's progress and sharing assessments. It also informs and guides the future planning when the children make the transfer into Key Stage 1.

When the majority of children in a lower department class (pupils aged 6, 7, and 8) are achieving and working within the P Levels and whose emotional and social abilities are significantly lower than average, then in agreement with the headteacher, the EYFS would be considered as a more appropriate basis for a suitable curriculum for those children.

PSHE

PSHE and citizenship is central to the development of the pupils in our school. At Courtlands we aim to help students learn to recognize their own worth, work well with others and become increasingly responsible for their own learning.

Pupils reflect on their experiences and understand how they are developing personally and socially, tackling many of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues that are part of growing up. They also find out about the main political and social institutions that affect our lives and about their responsibilities, rights and duties as individuals and members of communities. They learn to understand and respect our common humanity; diversity and differences so that they can go on to form the effective, fulfilling relationships that are an essential part of life and learning.

PHSE involves all aspects of being alive in the world and is a key element of our Curriculum. All our termly topic titles are PHSE themed. All subjects and learning objectives are planned around those themes. PHSE objectives and activities are planned from the National Curriculum, non-statutory guidance in PHSE, pupils EHC/Statement outcomes, LA guidance and values outlined in our Behaviour Policy.

Learning Outside the Classroom

As part of the schools commitment to providing a special curriculum, all children take part in learning outside the classroom (LOtC) lessons for half a day a week for the whole of their time at Courtlands School.

These lessons use a variety of outdoor activities, a focus on teaching the children skills and developing them as individuals to prepare them for the future. Our designed Courtlands LOtC curriculum provides continuity across the school with regular cross-curricular links so that the child has the ability to subconsciously make the transfer of learning. All learning outside the classroom lessons are planned around a structure based on meeting the pupils needs; as defined by The UN rights of a children, every child matters paper and Play England. Allowing opportunities for exploring curiosity, learning through 'Play is an essential part of every child's life. It is vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as for social, emotional, intellectual and physical development' (Play England, 2016).

Tell me, I'll forget

Show me, I'll remember

Involve me, I'll understand.

There are four significant headings that underpin each week's activities and focus; working with others; improving learning and performance; solving problems; planning and thinking skills. These are then supported by the overriding schools termly themes of Health and Wellbeing, Living in the wider world, Relationships.

Our LOtC curriculum provides memorable learning opportunities that help us to experience and make sense of the world around us. These experiences help the children to understand their feelings and behaviour. It is also in LOtC 'that they practise and consolidate making friends and learn to negotiate and cooperate with each other' (Learning Outside the Classroom, School Grounds) a valuable tool for those children who find it hard to access standard learning environments.

Using our school grounds as our outdoor classroom provides a multi-sensory and multi-faceted environment. By exploring their grounds, the pupils develop a sense of place, and learn to value and take ownership of their grounds and stimulate, challenge, excite and inspire young people to engage in the world beyond the classroom.

Computing

Computing skills are taught in each class, in small groups and individually and are practiced across all curriculum areas to embed practical use of skills. Discrete lessons are valued by both pupils and staff and lead to good progress in Computing skills. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to plan opportunities for ICT and computing usage in the delivery of other subjects. Skills include; word processing, presentation, programs, graphical modeling and other relevant programs that have a practical application in the real world. All classes have at least one weekly session of Ipad time, PC session and daily opportunities to use the class IWB to help consolidate cross-curricular learning objectives.

Science

Science for children means exploring, discovering, investigating and understanding the world around them. Ideally this should involve children doing things for themselves. Science can be used as a multi-sensory approach to learning.

For children to gain an understanding and knowledge of Science the development of positive attitudes needs to be planned into their exploration and investigations. They will use a range of skills and processes. Science will be taught weekly with opportunities to apply Literacy and Numeracy skills and with varied practical opportunities.

Physical Education

Physical Education should give all children, regardless of their ability, an opportunity to develop their physical competence in varied and challenging settings. They should move efficiently, effectively and safely, completing tasks that are appropriate to their needs. They should develop understanding, decision making and judgement skills through planning, performing and evaluating activities. PE provides the potential for the development of self confidence and self esteem, awareness of tolerance, fairness and concern for others, and the necessary skills to manage competitive and co-operative situations. Physical Education should lead to a greater understanding and enjoyment of exercise, health and fitness, leading to a healthy lifestyle.

To ensure coverage teachers follow a Scheme of Work and classes have regular timetabled PE sessions. Teachers assess their pupils regularly to inform next developmental skills. PE helps improve the gross and fine motor skills of the children which has an impact on their learning, skills and abilities in the classroom and across the curriculum.

RE

Religious education provokes challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human.

RE will develop children's knowledge and understanding of religious and non religious perspectives (e.g. humanism).

RE offers children opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development. It considers the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures. Students at Courtlands will learn from literature, visitors, visits made and experience of different cultures through music, dance and drama.

RE is more than just developing children's knowledge and understanding. It seeks to develop children's skills in investigation/enquiry, communication, interpretation, analysis and evaluation. These are important skills for children to develop.

The children will be encouraged to think about and explore a 'Thought for the day' daily. This is a time for pupils to collectively think about their own and others beliefs and to develop an individual sense of what is right and moral. This will help pupils compose a prayer that is read to the school at the end of each day.

History and Geography –

The Humanities are taught to encourage, promote and develop a child's sense of time, an awareness of change, within and beyond their own, appreciate the world they live in, climates, physical features, people and their culture. They need to know that what happens in the world has an impact on their own lives. Teachers aim to encourage children's ability to question and so develop their concepts of: attitude, values and issues, similarities and differences, process and systems and location and place.

History and Geography are taught discreetly as a focus for Topic work for one term a year, but is taught through other cross curricular opportunities.

Through knowledge, skills and understanding teaching of History and Geography includes chronological understanding, knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past, historical interpretation, historical enquiry, organisation and communication, geographical enquiry and skills, knowledge and understanding of places, pattern and process and of environmental change and sustainable development.

Fieldwork is integral to good historical and geographical teaching and we include as many opportunities as we can to involve children in practical historical and geographical research and enquiry. At Key Stage 1 we let all the children carry out an investigation into the local environment and we give them opportunities to observe and record information around the school site. At Key Stage 2 the children have opportunities to visit and study areas of historical and geographical interest at more distant locations as well as in the local area. In addition to field trips, there are on site themed whole day workshops, assemblies and after school clubs.

We were the first special school in England to be awarded the Geographical Association's Primary Geography Award, recognising the strength of geographical teaching and learning in the school.

Music and Art

As an essential part of our creative curriculum, pupils will be given opportunities to experience learning through the arts; music, art, drama and dance. Creative arts opportunities and activities contribute fully to cross curricular topics and wider themes in Plymouth and nationally.

Pupils are encouraged to extend their skills and enjoyment in artistic and musical processes and appreciation. Children will experience a variety of musical and artistic pieces of work, then study and discuss productions, reproductions, first hand experience and activities. These subjects also provide an invaluable chance to perform and show skills learnt and work created which develop important personal and social skills in school assemblies and outside school events.

Teaching and learning of these subjects is a fulfilling and enjoyable tool, through which pupils can gain skills and understanding of ideas and feelings of themselves, their community and the wider world, from a variety of times and cultures.

Design and Technology

Design and Technology prepares and challenges children to become creative problem-solvers. Children are encouraged to combine practical skills with an understanding of aesthetic, social and environmental issues as well as functions and industrial practices. Children will learn about food preparation, food safety, and hygiene. On the whole children will experience a form of Design and Technology on a weekly basis. The teaching and consistency of Design and Technology will be monitored through coordinator scrutiny and teacher surveys.

MFL/International

Modern Foreign Language is currently more formally taught in year six with one lesson per week. This develops an enthusiastic and positive attitude to languages and language learning through the development of language and language skills. The pupils become familiar with the sounds and simple written form of a modern foreign language. There are opportunities for pupils in earlier years to

develop their language skills through simple greetings and accumulating knowledge of numbers and colours. This is evident during our Internationally themed weeks that are held through the school year as part of our links with other schools and as link to our International studies. The International aspect increases cultural understanding by linking and learning about different countries and their people, and working with these people and an appropriate selection of resources about and from those countries and communities.

Monitoring and review:

The delivery of this policy will be monitored by the governors' curriculum committee through regular meetings with the curriculum leader, class visits, governor open days and joint work scrutiny. National Curriculum and skills coverage will be monitored by subject leaders through medium and long term planning scrutiny and regular staff meetings. Individual pupil progress will be monitored by the assessment coordinator and head teacher on a termly basis for core subjects. Quality of teaching and learning will be monitored by the school leadership team at least twice yearly and by subject leaders as informed by school management plan and School Development priorities.