

Curriculum Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide information to share with staff, governors, other professionals, families and other interested stakeholders. The policy incorporates our philosophy, aims and values as well as describing the approach to our curriculum, the content and the specialised approaches required for teaching the pupils at Briarwood. The Briarwood curriculum policy also aims to describe the context behind the tailored approach to our curriculum and the reasons why such a bespoke approach is required.

The curriculum policy does not contain the detail and content of our curriculum. This can be found in the Briarwood Curriculum Handbook.

A curriculum is the basis for any school to provide a meaningful and effective education to the pupils who attend. At Briarwood we believe this should be a broad and balanced approach which identifies and meets the needs of our pupils. The curriculum, alongside specialist teaching approaches, provides consistency throughout the school, whilst recognising developmental and age related aspects to learning.

The development of the curriculum at Briarwood, whilst being led by the Senior Leadership Team, is the result of hard work, knowledge, skill and passion of all staff and the other professionals we work with. We consider it their right to be involved in curriculum design and content. All teachers have a subject or curriculum area which they have become experts in and many learning support staff have also contributed to the development process. Staff have worked closely together to develop the curriculum, meaning there is real ownership and understanding to the route we are taking. Consistency is vital for pupils with learning disabilities and therefore careful consideration is taken when making any changes to the curriculum.

The policy document starts with describing the context, vision, values and intent of our curriculum. This underpins the fundamental need for a bespoke curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils at Briarwood. This policy also describes the curriculum design and subject overviews, however as mentioned previously, the curriculum content is detailed in the Briarwood Curriculum Handbook.

Context

Briarwood school is a special school for pupils aged from 3 to 19. We are spread across 3 sites and have 5 departments;

- The Pod our Early Years provision
- Primary
- Secondary
- Post 16 (which is co-located on the Primary site)
- Nexus (which is co-located on the Secondary site)

More information about the different departments can be found on our website. The differences in the curriculum within each department are clear throughout this policy.

We have 160 pupils across the age range. At Briarwood we support pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Autism (ASD) and children with Complex Needs and/or behaviours that challenge.

Many pupils come from the East central area of Bristol though some children come from other areas in the city; our pupils have a diverse mix of nationalities and languages.

Due to the complex nature of the pupils that attend Briarwood, it is our responsibility to provide them with the most appropriate curriculum, a tailored approach, to both academic learning, life skills and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education.

Vision and Values

“Enjoy, Engage, Learn”

We believe that Briarwood is a safe, happy and stimulating school that supports pupil’s individual needs. The staff and the school community work hard to ensure that a nurturing approach supports all pupils through their education, providing a bespoke curriculum to each child depending on their current needs.

At Briarwood all aspects of school life are designed to inspire and engage pupils, through a mix of a learning curriculum, creative approaches and essential life skills. The roles of communication and engagement are key to all we do and underpin our approach to learning.

Our curriculum is designed as a cohesive approach with an individual’s EHCP at the core; therefore facilitating greater involvement of families, the pupil and other professionals in their learning and development. The overarching curriculum vision is one that supports the idea of provision and curriculum linking together. Consequently, what a pupil needs at that point in time, becomes both a provision requirement and a learning opportunity. This means there are closer, consistent connections between the schools curriculum and the provision we offer. We provide positive challenges to foster individual achievements and promote confidence and self-expression. This allows the curriculum to show progress of pupils over time; celebrating the challenging, enriching and developmental progress of all pupils.

Intent

At Briarwood School our curriculum aims to ensure that the journey our pupils take through their education is informed. Through ensuring their access to the appropriate curriculum model - Acorn (Pre-Formal), Woodland (Semi-Formal), Forest (Formal), we aim to secure outstanding outcomes to develop their academic achievement, independence, engagement and social development as they transition through school and move towards adulthood. Our skills-based curriculum promotes preparation for adult life through ensuring learners have access to age and developmentally appropriate education that encourages all students to:

Enjoy learning that develops curiosity, creativity, expression and confidence.

Engage in the opportunities that our curriculum provides; whether this is academic, social, and emotional or a bespoke provision.

Learn – Our curriculum aims to enable pupils to develop knowledge, understand concepts and acquire skills, and be able to choose and apply these in relevant situations. This includes;

- Being equipped with skills that support them to be numerate and literate
- Communicating effectively within their own means
- Building independence, resilience and self-help skills
- Equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to be active members of their communities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leading as much of an active life as possible through developing independence skills to look after their body including the development of mobility skills
- Learning strategies for social and emotional development to promote them to access successful relationships
- Having positive interactions with the community and gain a sense of belonging

Our curriculum provides a broad and balanced education for all pupils that is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge for skills and future learning.

Rationale

Our curriculum is developmental, but child centred, with our recognition that each pupil will have a different pathway. It is a life skills and creative curriculum that aims to promote the social inclusion of all pupils and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life as pertinent to their circumstances. As the pupil's move through the school, the skills they need for living become an integral part of learning. These include

- Communication
- Academic achievement (including Literacy and Numeracy)
- Accreditation and Qualifications
- Mobility
- Independence
- Relationships
- Self-respect, dignity
- Self-esteem, self-confidence
- Self-regulation.

Although the National Curriculum and expectations it holds are taken into account, for the pupils at Briarwood, it is often more important to consider their needs and the skills that will be supportive for the future;

Content should be determined by the needs of the child rather than cultural values in respect to academic subjects and so it needs to be pupil centred and not subject centred. (*Powell and Jordan 1997:25*).

Assessment of the Briarwood curriculum is covered in the Assessment Policy, however it is important to note that the vision and intent of the curriculum have been considered in relation to the 'final report of the commission of assessment without levels.' This report encourages schools to adapt their curriculum to support the needs of the pupils;

"Removing levels encourages schools to develop approaches to in-school assessment which are better tied to curriculum content and which do not restrict teaching solely to the specific content in the National curriculum, but encourage the wider exploration of subjects which results in higher attainment and greater enjoyment. Similarly the freedom to choose their own approaches to assessment is consistent with the freedom many schools have to develop and deliver their own curriculum and allows schools to ensure their curriculum and approach to assessment are aligned."

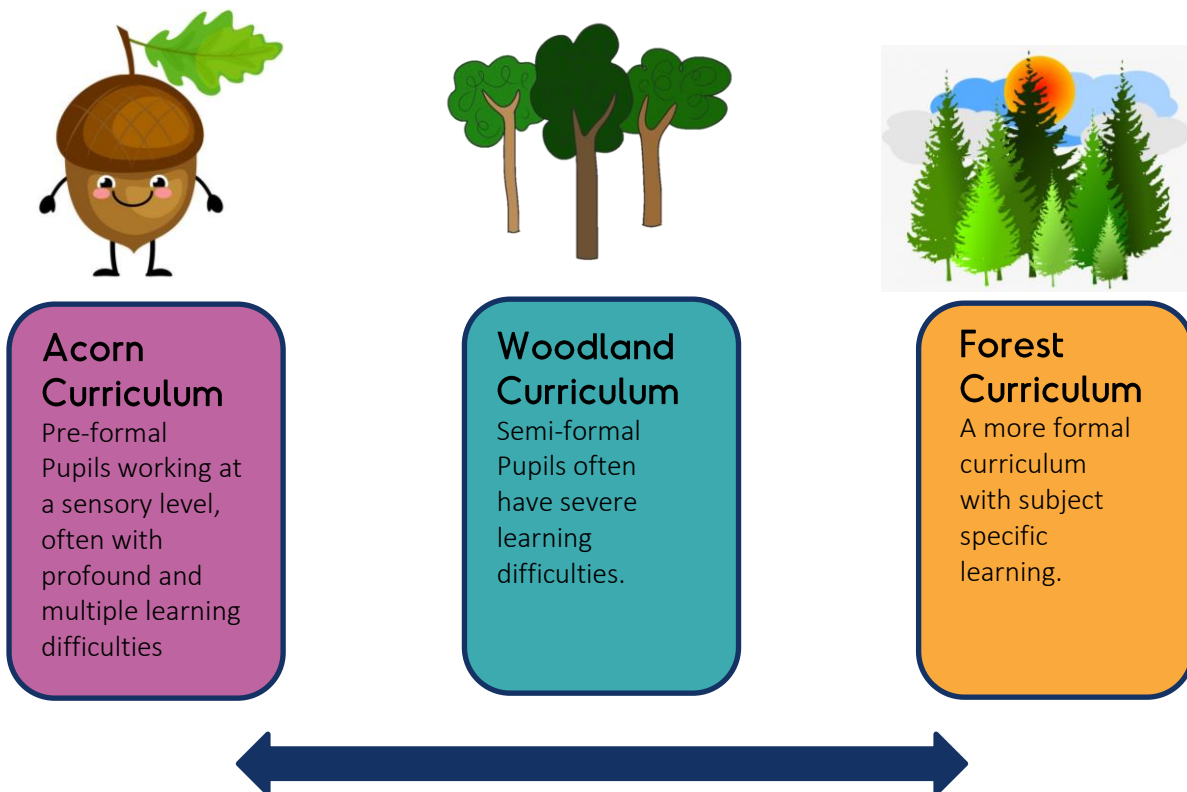
For the pupils at Briarwood, our curriculum must incorporate the opportunity for pupils develop depth of knowledge and understanding, including generalising skills over time. This is especially important where pupils are studying life skills or targets that fall outside of traditional areas. Briarwood school will ensure that our curriculum and approach to learning always;

- Delivers an adapted National Curriculum and offers a broad and balanced curriculum at a level appropriate to pupil attainment
- Provides stimulating activities and tasks
- Sets challenging, achievable targets for individual pupils
- Develops effective communication skills
- Develops technology skills which engage pupils in the advancing world of technology
- Encourages the tolerance of opinions and beliefs and reflect the multicultural nature of our school and wider society
- Develops self-confidence and skills towards independent living

- Encourages a caring, respectful attitude towards each other
- Ensures continuity and progression
- Enables access for all pupils
- Use enrichment and extra-curricular activities to enhance the education offered to pupils
- Engages professionals within the community, including therapists, sports coaches, artists, musicians etc

Curriculum design

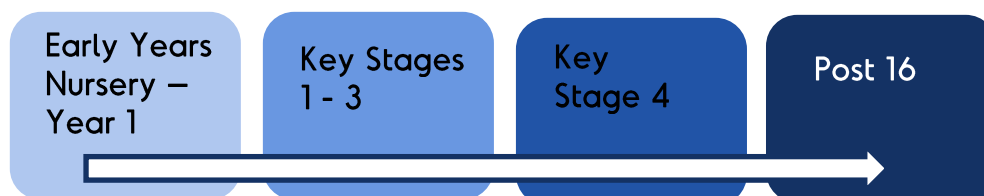
The Briarwood curriculum has been designed as a multi stranded approach in order to provide pupils with the most appropriate approach and content. In order to provide pupils at Briarwood with experiences that are relevant, interesting and challenging, and to identify opportunities for progression, we have adopted a curriculum structure which encompasses 3 broad levels: Acorn, (previously known as pre-formal), Woodland, (previously known as semi-formal) and Forest (previously known as formal). These terms, originally developed by Whitefield SAC (2009), offer a means of making subtle distinctions between not only groups of learners but also the degree of curriculum formalisation they will experience in either building the prerequisites for, or working within, a more 'conventional' National Curriculum type approach.



Whilst many pupils will work within one curriculum model for several years or their entire school career, as skills and knowledge progress, many will move onto the next model. The levels are not defined by age, but by need and achievement; allowing pupils to move flexibly between levels at any point during their school career. Each level covers skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of areas of learning, and they are blended together, so as to facilitate a 'learning flow' between the three. It may also be appropriate for some pupils to move to a less formal

curriculum model, to support skill consistency and maintenance. Individual learning needs are further met through bespoke intervention programmes for enhanced personalisation.

At Briarwood we also vary the curriculum based on age;



The starting point for the curriculum is the individual, with a programme designed to meet his/her needs taken from the full available curriculum, delivered in a way that is enjoyable and will engage each child or young person.

Each academic year, a pupil's EHCP is reviewed. The long term targets for this are used to populate a pupil's current learning map. The learning map features termly, yearly and long term targets for each EHCP area.

These targets are incorporated within the curriculum subject areas each term and the topics that a class are studying, making it entirely pupil led. All pupils, regardless of the curriculum strand they are following, study English and Maths. These subjects feature heavily in our curriculum as a developmental approach. They are taught both as discrete subjects and as cross-curricular skills within other subjects.

The Early Years

The Early Years Curriculum at Briarwood is followed from Nursery through to and including year two. We believe that an early years approach is the most suitable for the infant pupils at Briarwood. It is typical for students joining Briarwood to have missed out on a full time early year's education and therefore ensuring pupils are given the opportunity to focus on these key fundamentals is vital and offers most equitably experience for students. It is in keeping with the Early Years foundation stage (EYFS) expectations. We aim to provide a broad, balanced, differentiated curriculum which addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within a safe, secure, stimulating environment.

Our curriculum enables the pupils to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding in these areas of learning;

The prime areas;

- Personal, Emotional and Social Development. (PSED)
- Communication and Language. (CL)
- Physical development

The specific areas;

- Mathematics.
- Literacy.
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Art and Design

Throughout the EYFS we plan activities to give pupils learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals. Teaching and learning takes place within the classroom and outside areas. Pupils participate in a variety of activities, both with an adult and independently. The approach and curriculum incorporates a play based approach with specific teaching methods and opportunities being used to support pupil's needs. We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which young children learn.

As well as considering what opportunities we are providing for the pupils, we observe the skills and qualities that pupils need to support them to become successful learners throughout life. Included within our assessment, we use

the characteristics of learning to examine the overall development of the pupils. In addition to the standard characteristics of learning we also consider a pupils emotional wellbeing.

Whilst there are elements of the 3 stranded approach Acorn, Woodland and Forest, within the EYFS, it is less evident here due to the play based, child led approaches that are used. However, sensory approaches, specialist teaching methods, the use of TEACCH and specialist equipment are all utilised.

The Acorn Curriculum

Pupils at very early levels of development (pre-subject specific learning) will access the Acorn Curriculum. The Acorn curriculum is a sensory approach to learning which enables pupils to develop a sense of security in the school environment, which is comprehensible and meaningful to them. The curriculum acknowledges what learners can do by supporting and developing their strengths and abilities. It is defined both developmentally and through generalisation of skills and is finely stepped so that progression can be plotted, measured and acknowledged. The curriculum focuses on developing the learner's understanding both of the world around them, and of social interactions and relationships. It values the process as much as the achievement and it is flexible in order to be responsive to the needs of the individual learner. It is delivered in an integrated manner incorporating learning, therapy and health needs. All pupils will be given maximum opportunities to achieve the highest level of independence possible.

More information about the content of the Acorn Curriculum can be found in the Briarwood Curriculum Handbook.

The Woodland Curriculum

The Woodland Curriculum is a flexible approach, designed as a mixture of the Acorn and Forest curriculums. It gives teachers the opportunity to support pupil's strengths and fill their gaps, whilst using the best approach to their learning style. Pupils following our Woodland Curriculum learn best when learning is related to their own experience. Some may learn through play; others will learn more effectively through functional activities, and yet others will respond well to a topic-based approach. The curriculum topic content allows pupils to access a personalised curriculum, structured around their learning style.

More information about the content of the Woodland Curriculum can be found in the Briarwood Curriculum Handbook

The Forest Curriculum

The Forest curriculum consists of adapted National Curriculum subjects, along with some life skills and creative aspects. Pupils working within this curriculum, tend to be able to access more formal learning with subject specific knowledge and skills. Pupils access the range of topics and personalised formal curriculum opportunities as well as National Curriculum subjects for their Key Stage, modified in the light of their developmental level and special educational needs. Life skills and independence skills will also form a large part of the curriculum. There is generally a high level of formal teaching / structure, however we avoid making the Forest curriculum too abstract; teachers ensure that learning is linked to topics, practical activities and consolidated and applied in practical sessions.

More information about the content of the Forest Curriculum can be found in the Briarwood Curriculum Handbook

Key Stage 4

At the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) and into key stage 4, the curriculum recognises the need for pupils to move towards a higher proportion of life skills and independence. The SEND code of practice recommends that from 14 years old;

“High aspirations about employment, independent living and community participation should be developed through the curriculum and extra-curricular provision. Schools should seek partnerships with employment services, businesses, housing agencies, disability organisations and arts and sports groups, to help children understand what is available to them as they get older, and what it is possible for them to achieve. It can be particularly powerful to meet disabled adults who are successful in their work”
(SEND code of practice January 2015)

Our curriculum continues to follow the structure of previous years, with the Acorn, Woodland and Forest curriculums. All the same subjects are on offer to the pupils to access as a teacher deems necessary. In Key stage 4 in addition to the Briarwood Curriculum offer, students can access ASDAN or NCFE routes of learning, these are combined with our established curriculum to offer pupils a broad and balanced curriculum whilst preparing them for post 16 study and accreditation routes. On all routes, pupils will continue to have targets set and monitored as per Briarwood curriculum guidelines. These options should be seen as a supportive package to enhance the curriculum as opposed to formulating a curriculum in their own right. There is still an expectation for formal assessment where appropriate.

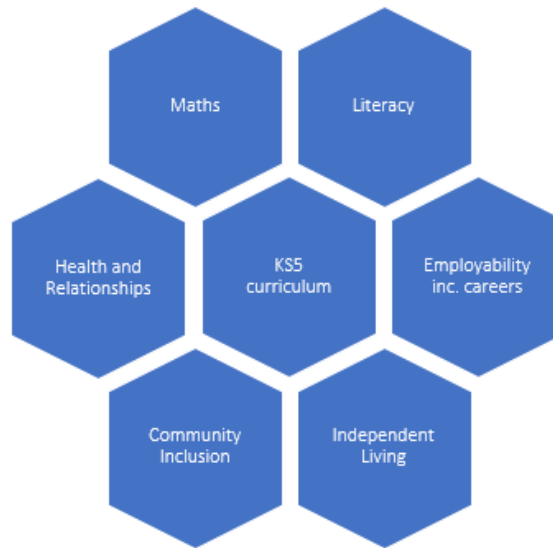
Acorn

Pupils will follow the topics and coverage provided within the Briarwood curriculum framework. This will however be supported by Asdan’s Transition Challenge. By using Transition Challenge to enhance the curriculum, pupils will have the opportunity to gain accreditation for their work. There are 2 levels of Transition Challenge – Sensory for our most profound pupils and introduction and progression for those working a little higher. Both support English and Maths skills as well as several other age appropriate examples and activities to support the delivery of our curriculum.

Woodland and Forest

Pupils considered to be working within the Briarwood Woodland or Forest curriculums, will continue with the Briarwood Curriculum model. This will be enhanced through the use of ASDAN’s Towards Independence and Workright units of work. Pupils English learning can be recorded through the ‘developing communication skills’ module at introduction or progression. Both cover the strands of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. Maths learning can be recorded through the use of developing numeracy skills, again at the levels of Introduction or Progression. Maths covers the areas of Number, Measure Shape and Space, Position Pattern and Sorting, Time and Handling data. Pupils will continue to work on the Briarwood curriculum areas for the rest of their time e.g. afternoons, however this can be enhanced through the use of towards independence modules. For example when working on My Creativity a teacher may choose to use the Towards Independence module sound rhythm and music in order to record and accredit the learning.

Post 16



Much of the work within Briarwood Post 16 is based on the absolute belief that, fundamental to our role, is planning and preparing young adults for life beyond Briarwood. Within our sixth form, all aspects of the curriculum are based on this ideology fulfilling the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes as required by the Department of Education. PfA identified four key outcomes in relation to preparing young people for adulthood. These are:

- Employment
- Health
- Independent Living
- Community Participation

We modify the curriculum to ensure that we concentrate on building important skills in readiness for adulthood whilst supporting individuals to reach their full potential and maximise success. Students have access to Employability opportunities, and we have strong relationships with external partners / and charitable organisations who support us to provide exciting and relevant vocational experiences.

We actively encourage choice making ensuring that students are key participants in making everyday decisions as well as those about their futures. We recognise the importance of building on interests and the ability to self-occupy and provide leisure opportunities as well as ample socially inclusive opportunities to develop relationships with peers both within and outside of the school setting.

Ensuring that we provide students with excellent opportunities to build on their level of independence is also of the highest priority and shopping, cooking, self-care, health, and home maintenance feature highly within the curriculum. We recognise the importance of enrichment and of the arts and work well with external partners to broaden student's horizons and provide experiences to support personal growth and creativity. We enjoy community participation and ensure that ample opportunity is given for students to develop the skills needed to become responsible and active members of their own society able to contribute and excel.

In addition to the above, all learners engage in appropriate literacy and numeracy sessions, developing core skills that are appropriate to their developmental and cognitive abilities. Post 16 promote the continuation of the learning routes which have been selected and established within their secondary years. These differentiated routes include early communication and problem-solving skills, functional literacy and numeracy pathways, or continuation of routes towards national curriculum expectations.

Our curriculum is driven by student need and pathways; however, we are able to accredit learning through nationally recognised awarding bodies ASDAN and NCFE. We endeavour to ensure that all students leave Briarwood Post 16 with an exciting portfolio of qualifications to demonstrate their strengths and achievements to their next providers. We have an excellent relationship with adult service providers and lead the LDD Post 16 partnership with three special schools. This has enabled us to develop courses offsite exposing pupils to new environments, peers, and settings as well as sharing expertise. This important, inclusive, transition work provides opportunity for young adults to experience adult centred and potentially future provisions in readiness for future destinations.

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers, the Preparation for Adulthood teams, social care, health, and education to ensure that transitions into the adult services are as smooth and carefully planned as possible. Pupils best interests and views are placed at the heart of everything we do with a strong emphasis on preparing them for the journey into adulthood and indeed life beyond Briarwood.

More information on the Post 16 curriculum can be found in the Curriculum Handbook, the Post 16 Curriculum Handbook and the Careers Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body

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

The governing board will also ensure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
- Enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the National Curriculum and other statutory requirements
- The school is teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, maths, science and (subject to providing the right to withdraw) religious education, and enough teaching time is provided
- Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN)
- The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements
- It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- It fulfils its role in processes to disapply pupils from all or part of the National Curriculum, where appropriate, and in any subsequent appeals
- Pupils from year 8 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced

Headteacher

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

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing body
- Where appropriate, the individual needs of some pupils are met by permanent or temporary disapplication from all or part of the National Curriculum
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements
- The governing body is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum

- The governing board is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEN

Other staff

Other staff will ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy.

The Head of Education and Skills has responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum across the school.

Heads of school will monitor the impact of the curriculum in their schools with support from the Head of Education and Skills.

Because we believe in a collaborative approach, teachers will take on a subject co-ordinator role. This may be because they have particular expertise in this area or a special interest. They are not however subject leaders and are not responsible for other teacher's performance and pupil outcomes. More information about the role of a subject coordinator can be found in the Subject Co-ordinators Handbook.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Termly planning
- Differentiation to meet individual needs of pupils
- Using a range of teaching and learning strategies, techniques and resources
- Attending training as appropriate
- Assessment for learning

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Curriculum will be monitored by:

The Head teacher and the Head of Education and Skills (Deputy Head) alongside the Heads of schools through;

- Meetings with subject co-ordinators
- Auditing of subject handbooks
- Learning walks focused on subject implementation
- Auditing school resources
- Analysing assessment data and accreditation
- Observing lessons with specific focus
- Work sampling and moderating
- Talking to pupils

Resources

The Curriculum areas will be maintained through an allocated budget managed by the Head of Education and Skills.

Resources will be allocated to curriculum areas in line with the priorities indicated in the School Improvement Plan.

Equal Opportunities

The school supports the rights of all pupils and staff to equal access and opportunities regardless of age, culture, religion, perceived gender, social lifestyles, ability, disability or sexuality. The achievement of all pupils is highly valued. All pupils have an entitlement of access to the National Curriculum.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety issues are described fully in the school's Health and Safety Policy. All subject co-ordinators have a responsibility to ensure that Curriculum Handbooks and procedures pay due attention to Health and Safety issues.

Professional Development

All staff are provided with equal opportunity of access to professional development and training in relevant curriculum areas and within budget resources. Training needs will be linked to Performance Management, Staff Interviews and the School Development Plan.

Links to Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Curriculum Handbook
- Subject Handbooks
- EYFS policy
- Assessment policy
- SEN policy and information report
- Equality information and objectives
- Post 16 Policy and Post 16 Curriculum
- Careers Policy