

Core Pathway Rationale

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SEF
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Pathway Rationale

A broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on transferable skills that build confidence and independence across both subjects and activities of daily living for functional application of learning

The Core Pathway provides a broad curriculum which ensures both a knowledge-rich and skills-based curriculum for pupils with uneven profiles of need who require significant adaptation and therapeutic support to engage and make sustained progress.

Pupils will access this broad spiral curriculum (which includes national curriculum subject specific learning), through a spiral educational approach where fundamental themes are encountered through predominantly project-based learning with increasing complexity as content is explored in greater depth, allowing learners to build upon their previous knowledge and skills, reinforcing long term memory.

Aligned pathway profile

Feature	Pathway position
Curriculum model	Broad, balanced, skills-based, functional application, spiral structure
Assessment	Subject assessment, PLIMs, PSHEE Framework, moderation, interventions, therapy-informed evidence.
Teaching approach	Evidence-based, metacognitive strategies, explicit, multisensory, modelling, scaffolded and adaptive
Core purpose	Skills as well as knowledge, communication, relationships, independence and real-world application

Overview

The Core Pathway curriculum is designed to provide pupils with a broad, balanced, and ambitious education through a coherent, spiral model of learning. Key ideas are revisited with increasing depth so that pupils can build secure understanding, practice skills in different contexts, and make links between learning and real life.

The curriculum reflects the changing profile of pupils within the Core Pathway. It is adapted to meet complex communication, cognition, sensory, social and emotional needs while maintaining high expectations for participation and progress.

It develops personal identity, relationships, understanding of the world, communication, creativity, digital awareness, and increasing independence, alongside national curriculum subject areas.

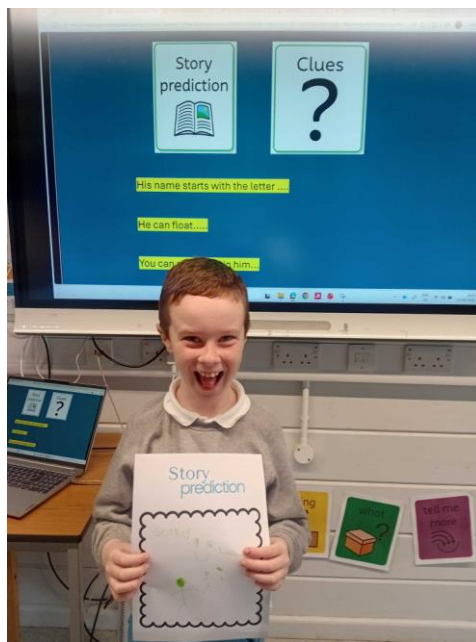
The approach to learning is carefully framed within a detailed understanding of learning needs at a given time, along with parent and multi-agency collaboration. The curriculum is organised so that pupils understand themselves, their relationships, their local community, the natural world, digital life, and their role as citizens. It builds strong foundations and prepares pupils for the next phase of learning and for life beyond school.

Pupil profile

Pupils in the Core Pathway have a wide range of learning needs and may require significant support with communication, attention, regulation, working memory, processing, generalisation, social understanding and independence.

Pupils have different learner profiles and require highly personalised approaches to regulation, readiness for learning, and ability to access subject-specific learning with adaptation. This means the pathway must be flexible, neuroinclusive, and carefully matched to individual needs.

Core pupils benefit from predictable routine, visual structure, explicit teaching, scaffolding, repeated practice, often with concrete experiences, sensory-aware approaches and meaningful opportunities to apply learning.



Intent

The intent of the Core curriculum is to reduce barriers to learning, to give pupils a rich and accessible curriculum that builds skills, communication, independence, emotional literacy, curiosity, and a sense of belonging.

The curriculum aims to help pupils develop a secure understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world; apply learning through creative and practical experiences; build the vocabulary and language skills needed to explain ideas; and develop the confidence to participate safely and positively in school, home and community life.

The curriculum is ambitious because it does not reduce pupils' entitlement. Instead, it adapts how skills and knowledge are taught, revisited, and applied so that all pupils make meaningful progress from their starting points.

The essence of the Core Pathway can be seen clearly in the visual consistencies evident across classroom management and teaching.



Curriculum design

The Core curriculum uses a spiral model. It is designed to be ambitious for all pupils, with learning closely aligned to individual needs. English, phonics and mathematics are adapted to ensure strong foundations with a focus on generalising skills and knowledge. Pupils revisit key ideas each year at increasing levels of complexity and depth, moving from personal and concrete experiences towards local, national, global and future-focused understanding.

The curriculum includes English, phonics, written output, mathematics, science, foundation subjects, personal development, careers education, work-related learning, enrichment and community participation, with cross-curricular and project-based learning at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils learn about what is tangible to them, which promotes curiosity, engagement and deeper understanding. Over time, pupils work towards appropriate qualifications, ranging from AQA Entry Level/ Ascentis maths and English, ASDAN life skills awards and BTEC Pre-Vocational Studies.

Implementation

Maths and English are taught in class groups with age related content and functional based qualifications. Pupils access phonics and written output daily.

Teachers have written long-term schemes of work for foundation subjects, which are reviewed and adapted into half-term plans so that learning remains responsive to the needs, interests, and progress of each class and pupil.

Teaching is reflective, explicit and practical. Staff use modelling, scaffolding, repetition, vocabulary and language development, visual support, practical resources and structured opportunities for retrieval and application.

Adaptive teaching is central. Pupils may show learning through using different communication systems, including photographs, symbols, Makaton signs, and used with/without spoken language. Pupils receive supported interaction, digital tools, and practical demonstration. The emphasis is on

irresistible offers of learning that enable pupils to engage, participate meaningfully and securely understand.

Assessment and achievement

Achievement is monitored closely through an interconnected system including subject-specific assessment, PLIM progress, Earwig evidence, assessment of pupils learning from their baseline information, PBS data, and moderation. Where appropriate, this is further supported by externally accredited outcomes. This approach ensures that assessment is reliable, purposeful and informed by a secure understanding of pupils' starting points and progress over time.

The SEND PSHEE Framework captures how pupils apply learning in real-world contexts, including managing feelings, keeping safe, building relationships, participating in the community, and developing independence.

Assessment informs the next steps and helps leaders understand whether pupils are remembering more, applying more and becoming more independent over time. It also ensures that progress is recognised for pupils whose development may be uneven or non-linear.



Integrated therapy and inclusion

Therapeutic approaches are embedded into the daily curriculum so that pupils are regulated, and ready to communicate, engage and learn. Therapy advice supports communication, sensory regulation, physical access, emotional understanding, and independence.

Inclusive practice is achieved through adaptation rather than a one-size-fits-all model. Staff identify barriers based on evidence data and adjust content, teaching, resources, environment, grouping, communication and pace so that pupils can access core concepts, skills and experience success.

Teachers in the Core pathway skillfully use visual consistencies, sensory strategies, assistive technology, adapted recording, pre-teaching, overlearning, metacognitive prompts, and targeted interventions where needed.



Personal development and preparation for adulthood

Personal development runs through the Core curriculum. Pupils learn about identity, relationships, fairness, rights, responsibilities, democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, respect and tolerance in ways that are meaningful to their developmental stage and age.

The Belonging and Beyond theme develops acceptance, understanding, community access, and a sense of belonging. Natural World theme develops care for the environment, sustainability, and responsibility. Being Connected develops online safety, digital communication, friendship, empathy, cooperation, and safe participation in modern life.

Preparation for Adulthood is built gradually across the pathway through independence, communication, self-advocacy, community understanding, emotional literacy and practical application of learning.

Transition

The Core Pathway curriculum ensures that, where appropriate, pupils can move towards more subject-specific or accreditation-linked learning. Staff use baseline, progress evidence, EHCP outcomes and pupil profiles to plan next steps.

Transitions are supported through keeping familiar routines, clear communication, family engagement, shared assessment information, and carefully planned gradual exposure to opportunities and experience of new expectations, environments, and staff.

Quality assurance

Leaders assure quality through Governor Monitoring Visits, SIP Visits, curriculum conversations, reviews, learning walk, lesson observations, planning, teacher moderation, data added to the Earwig Platform, pupil progress meetings, phase discussions, staff professional development and pupil/family feedback.

Termly review questions

- How do leaders know the curriculum remains ambitious, coherent and matched to the changing cohort across all pathways?

- What evidence shows pupils are learning, remembering, applying and communicating more from their individual starting points?
- Where are pupils making non-linear progress, and how is assessment capturing this with enough precision?
- How are EHCP outcomes, PfA goals, therapy advice and family and pupil views shaping curriculum design and teaching?
- How has professional learning changed classroom practice, staff judgement and pupil outcomes, not just staff knowledge?
- How are oracy, total communication, written output and assistive technology reducing barriers to learning and well-being?
- What does moderation, comparative judgement and external assurance tell leaders and governors about reliability and impact?
- What is the workload, resourcing, staffing, premises and therapy-capacity implications for the next stage of implementation?

Impact

The intended impact is that pupils develop the skills, confidence and independence required for successful progression across the provision and into adulthood, including meaningful community participation.

Learning is linked to national curriculum and pupils' flight paths and destination drives exposure to national curriculum foundation subject content to support best outcomes. Pupils develop secure, connected skills across the curriculum and can apply learning functionally with increasing confidence.

Pupils become more curious, resilient, communicative, independent, and socially aware. They build language and communication skills, positive relationships, emotional understanding, and practical skills needed for future learning and fuller participation in school, family, and community life.

Parent testimonial: *"C hasn't stopped buzzing about the trip! I'm so incredibly proud of him. He would never ever go to anything like this – the difference in him in the last year is crazy. He's like a different child. He's so settled and happy at school; you make him feel safe and to me this is everything, so thank you. One happy mother!"*