



**EDUCATION**

**Curriculum Statement**





## ***“If a child cannot learn in the way we teach, we must teach in a way they can learn.”***

Based on a quote from Ignacio Estrada, as cited in McInerney, 2015.

### **1 - Introduction**

Our Place Schools is registered with Ofsted as an Independent Residential Special School, approved to provide education for children with Special Educational Needs and Difficulties (SEND), aged 8 years up to the age of 19 years. All of our pupils have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), and all of our pupils fall into the category of Child in Looked After (CLA). Due to the fact that our pupils are all CLA, the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs of our children play a huge part in their ability to learn and develop.

At Our Place Schools we aim to provide a holistic, progressive, individually bespoke and creative curriculum which has our pupil's wellbeing (as defined by Section 10(2) of the Children Act, 2004) at the centre of all we do.

We aim that our curriculum will be pioneering - designed to influence our pupils so that they can achieve positive, happy and as independent lives as possible as they transition into adulthood.

Our curriculum is evolving and flexible in nature to ensure we meet the Social, Emotional and Mental Health, Communication and Interaction, Cognitive and Sensory needs of our cohort. We seek to lower anxiety levels and respond to the unique talents of our pupils, building their self-esteem, worth and confidence as they develop.

The main influential factors which guide this Curriculum Vision Policy are as follows:

- Mandatory and guidance documents issued by DFE, such as 'The Independent School Standards, advice for 'Independent Schools' March 2018, 'Residential Special School, National Minimum Standards' 2015.
- The Equality Act 2010, Education: does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6, Chapter 1 of the act.
- The Equality Act 2010 Chapter 15, Part 2, Chapter 1, to include respect for other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation
- National Curriculum, 2014.
- The improvement points stated by Ofsted in their report, September 2018.
- The improvement points stated by Ofsted in their report from their monitoring visit in July 2019.
- Department for Education "Careers Strategy: Making the most of everyone's skills and talents" (Dec 2017).

## 2 - Aims / Intention:

The curriculum is starting to be embedded in our school to meet the individual needs of our pupils, and for some, to begin to address what has happened in their past to shape them for the bright futures that lie ahead.

We want our pupils to flourish and feel the joys that learning can bring - know how to look after themselves, to enjoy the changing of the seasons and actively celebrate dates in the calendar, have experienced differing genres of music, poems, books, to participate in cookery lessons, enjoy going to differing places and environments (and learning how to behave in a socially acceptable manner) gain knowledge of differing cultures, beliefs and opinions. We want our pupils to have enriched lives and develop a zest for life and learning – through the above we will teach them the daily living skills they require for their journeys into adulthood.

At Our Place Schools, the curriculum aims / intends to enable our pupils to:

- Ensure that principles are actively promoted to encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) as set out in Part 2, Chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010.
- Access Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development by actively engaging / participating in activities that promote the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. To include geographical and historical aspects of their environment, and of times and places.
- Develop emotional literacy and self-regulation strategies.
- Develop a healthy self-esteem, self-belief and resilience.
- Communicate effectively through the use of speech, signs, symbols, ICT and the written word.
- Experience meaningful personal and social accomplishments.
- Maximise their levels of independence and develop life-skills including making choices and decisions relating to their own interests.
- Engage through their preferred learning styles.
- Develop literacy skills that are functional in a variety of situations.
- Develop mathematical skills that are functional in a variety of situations.
- Practice & use skills to generalise in a range of situations and with differing people.
- Experience the joy that engaging in learning opportunities offers.
- Know their own goals and become all they aspire to be, to include having a clear understanding of careers advice available to them.
- Make significant educational achievements and have notable academic success.
- Develop agility, confidence and physical co-ordination and extend fine and gross motor skills, to include playing outside.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle and stay safe now and in the future: a lifelong holistic learning perspective to include adolescence, sexual health, and preparation into adulthood.
- Develop their creativity in music and the arts.
- Develop familiarity and literacy in a range of Information Communication Technology (ICT).
- Develop an idea of science and STEM, through simple cause and effect, curiosity and intrigue, observation and experiment, and creating a sense of awe and wonder.



### **3 - The Thrive Approach:**

Last academic year we started our journey into embracing 'The Thrive Approach'. In November 2019 our Director of Education, SENCO and Deputy Head of Care completed their training course and became Thrive Licensed Childhood Practitioners. Throughout the school week we are running timetabled Thrive sessions with our pupils, with the aim of building their emotional health and wellbeing. All of the Our Place School staff have received initial Thrive training which has helped them gain an insight and knowledge into the Thrive Approach.

The Thrive Approach supports young people with their emotional health, wellbeing and social skills, all of which are needed to enable learning to take place. Young people cannot always tell us how they are feeling, however, the way they behave can tell us a lot about how they are feeling. The Thrive Approach draws on the latest research from current neuroscience, recent attachment research, current studies of effective learning and current models of child development, in order to help us to understand the needs being signalled by young people's behaviour. Working with parents and or care and teachers, our Thrive practitioners will carry out assessments of identified children's social, emotional and behavioural needs which help us to build an Action Plan of targeted strategies and activities to help children re-engage with learning and life.

The Thrive Approach is based on growing evidence that the brain develops through personal and social interaction. The relationships that we have with significant adults is fundamental to who we grow up to be. Our brain is built through trillions of brain-cell connections made by sight, sound, smell, touch and movement. Positive experiences enhance brain connections, and sustained negative experiences can restrict them. Through simple, repeated activities over time, within a safe and caring environment, Thrive aims to compensate for interruptions in emotional development, when they affect a child's ability to enjoy life and learn.

#### **4 - Content / Implementation:**

At Our Place Schools we are proud of the fact that we aim to shape what we do according to the individual pupils on roll. As such, we are flexible to how we devise and deliver the curriculum we offer and will continue to adapt and refine it as the need arises. We aim for our curriculum to be inclusive of all our pupils needs.

Using our assessment and knowledge of pupils, we plan our curriculum to encourage next phases of learning to support progress. We work hard to identify and remove barriers to learning by using our expertise, sensitivity, perception and adaptability to respond to the pupil's changing social and emotional needs. We provide opportunities to experience challenge and success and know when to ease off when frustration / lack of resilience begins to show.

We know that our pupils respond to innovative and flexible approaches to learning and therefore use these to motivate and promote curiosity and intrigue. We believe that pupils learn in different ways, so we modify our teaching styles and resources to match pupil's learning styles. We allow pupils to make mistakes without undue criticism and we give them time to be successful. We value all attempts and contributions. We actively promote that the pupils have ownership in their own learning and if they are self-motivated in a particular area, this is encouraged and supported. We encourage our pupils to persevere and thus develop resilience.

A long term plan (Curriculum Topic Cycle) has been devised to plan for an academic year, consisting of three termly topics, with key learning outcomes, the 'value' we will be concentrating on (per half term) and key events planned for. Planning is flexible and will reflect the individual pupil's changing and developing learning priorities, abilities, and interests.

A medium term plan / overview of the term ahead is completed by teachers for individual pupils, stating what they will have learnt / experienced by the end of that specific term. We set high but achievable expectations of every pupil, taking the time to nurture their individual abilities by establishing what they already know and building on individual responses. We structure and pace learning opportunities to make them challenging and enjoyable and match activities closely to personalised next steps / planned for outcomes in learning.

A short term / weekly plan ('Take One') is written by teachers.

We recognise that many of our pupils will not have had access to the early experiences that we would hope for in our young people. There are gaps in our pupil's experiences, going forward we want to give them fun, exciting opportunities that will enrich their lives and bridge those gaps.

Launched in 1995, 'Take One Picture' is the London National Gallery's countrywide scheme for primary schools which aims to inspire a lifelong love of art and learning by promoting the role of visual arts within education.

We have taken this idea one step further by teacher's planning for a different 'Take One'... each week to fall in-line with our topic (taken from our Curriculum Topic Cycle).

This holistic approach ensures that our pupils will gain a balanced breadth of knowledge and learning from differing subject starting points over the course of an academic year and beyond e.g. 'Take one... poem/ song/ sign/ story/ piece of fruit/ sound/ smell/ picture/ word/ flower/ tree etc...' the list is endless. This allows the pupils to gain learning from different influences, cultures, genres and senses. It provides the teaching staff with a definite point of interest (for the pupils) to deliver their learning intentions, and as such, gives exposure to differing mediums for our pupils.

We hope that as pupil's are given opportunities to immerse themselves in differing media, their interests, natural motivators and strengths will show through – allowing us to enhance and nurture their learning further, and with the possibility of future paths they may follow into their working / adult lives (if appropriate).

We provide additional activities that promote engagement, inclusion and achievement. These include:

- The Daily Mile.
- At least weekly Forest School sessions.
- At least weekly Gardening sessions.
- At least weekly Yoga sessions.
- At least weekly off-site trips to support learning intentions and develop familiarities with pupil's locality.
- Weekly swimming lessons (off-site).
- Celebrations of important calendar dates.
- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) unit awards.
- Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) certificates.
- Transition Programmes and Careers Education

## **5 - Teaching Methods:**

All our pupils have individual timetables with a high level of support. Staffing is on a ratio pupil 1:1 staff or higher, dependent upon the activity. This high level of support means that a wide range of teaching and learning methods can be used to accommodate the different learning styles of individual pupils and overcome barriers to learning. We use semi structured and highly structured methods, according to individual needs.

We aim to further utilise:

- Intensive Interaction.
- Alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) including Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).
- Symbols, photos and objects of reference.
- Makaton.
- Social / Sensory Stories.
- Sensory Integration.
- The Teaching, Expanding, Appreciating, Collaborating, Cooperating Holistic (TEACCH) values.
- The Applied Behaviour Analysis Approach (ABA)



## **6 - Outcomes / Impact:**

The Our Place Schools Curriculum is delivered within a caring, empathetic and genuine social and emotional climate of unconditional positive regard.

The impact of our curriculum is that our pupils:

- Make progress in all areas of their learning and development.
- Achieve the individual Outcomes as stated in EHCP's, Pupil Education Plans (PEPs) and Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings.
- Can communicate effectively via their preferred mode of communication.
- Are prepared for their journeys into adulthood.
- Are as independent as they can be.
- Are supported to access and build familiarity with their local community.
- Are exposed to and encouraged to explore a range of differing arts, music, experiences, media, resources and places – developing their own preferences.
- Experience the conditions of trust where they feel secure enough to attempt to learn.
- Experience patience, tolerance, humour and warmth from familiar and trusted staff.
- Experience an atmosphere in which they feel that we know and care for them, enjoy being with them and respect them by taking their feelings, interests and ideas into account.
- Are encouraged and supported to express their feelings and we accept the pupil's right to feel anger, sadness, anxiety as well as positive feelings.
- Will show respect and tolerance for others, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics as set out in Part 2, Chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **7 - Accreditation and Transition.**

Pupils at Our Place School each have unique and complex needs, challenging us to find creative ways of engaging them in meaningful, motivating learning. Staff work hard to respond to the pupils' individual learning styles, interests and motivations. Our pupils face profound challenges in their everyday life and require personalised approaches to enable them to communicate, engage with and make sense of the world around them.

Whilst they each require a uniquely differentiated and personalised approach, they also need to learn across the breadth of the National Curriculum and Adult Curriculum.

In our Post 16 education we challenge the pupils to be the best that they can be. Our goal is for each individual to leave us with the skills and tools needed to move on to their next steps. Our curriculum is highly personalised to the long term outcomes of the individual and focuses on supporting pupils to become more independent in all aspects of their lives. The long term outcomes are taken directly from the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and are reviewed annually. The Post 16 curriculum focuses on 4 key areas:

1. education and employment,
2. community inclusion
3. independent living and
4. health

These four key areas form the Preparation for Adulthood outcomes which are worked on with all of our pupils throughout their time with us.

As stated in the May 2019 Department for Education guidance “16 to 19 study programmes: guidance (2019 to 2020 academic year)” All 16 to 19 study programmes should be designed to provide pupils with a structured and challenging learning programme that supports their development and progression in line with their career plans. Study programmes should be individually tailored but will typically combine the elements below:

1. Substantial qualifications that stretch pupils and prepare them for education at the next level or for employment
2. English and mathematics where pupils have not yet achieved a GCSE grade 4
3. Work experience to give pupils the opportunity to develop their career choices and to apply their skills in real working conditions
4. Other non-qualification activity to develop pupils’ character, broader skills, attitudes and confidence, and to support progression.

As stated in the SEN Code of practice – “All pupils aged 16 to 19 (and, where they will have an EHC plan, up to the age of 25) should follow a coherent study programme which provides stretch and progression and enables them to achieve the best possible outcomes in adult life. Schools and colleges are expected to design study programmes which enable pupils to progress to a higher level of study than their prior attainment, take rigorous, substantial qualifications, study English and maths, participate in meaningful work experience and non-qualification activity. They should not be repeating learning they have already completed successfully. For pupils who are not taking qualifications, their study programme should focus on high quality work experience, and on non-qualification activity which prepares them well for employment, independent living, being healthy adults and participating in society.”

In Post 16, the curriculum changes to reflect the change in emphasis in preparing our young people for life beyond school. We want them to be confident, independent and responsible individuals who feel equipped to make informed choices about their futures. We consolidate pupils’ prior study and aim to broaden and develop previous skills.

The timetable includes Functional Skills sessions where pupils continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills with an emphasis placed on utilising these skills in very practical ‘real life’ situations. Pupils are encouraged to plan and organise their weekly trips into the local community and to develop skills such as cooking basic meals and using public transport.

Pupils requiring a more sensory approach benefit from accessing a curriculum tailored to individual needs.

All pupils continue to benefit from access to a wide range of creative opportunities.

Pupils’ achievement is accredited through a wide variety of ASDAN programmes and qualifications. (Please see “Accreditation Options” section for further information).

At Our Place School it is our role to set high expectations and challenge our pupils – irrespective of their ability, and we can do this by:

- Believing that every young pupil, no matter how complex or challenging, can achieve with the right support and intervention
- Providing exciting, innovative opportunities for learning
- Using assessment to guide planning and teaching;
- Setting precise and challenging targets for the knowledge, skills and understanding to be acquired by each pupil;
- Ensuring that the aims, purposes and expectations of the lesson are clearly stated and that pupils understand what is expected of them;
- Ensuring that both staff and pupils are involved in the evaluation of learning

## Careers and SEND

As stated in the DfE 'Careers strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents' (December 2017), the Government was "all young people to understand the full range of opportunities available to them, to learn from employers about work and the skills that are valued in the work place and to have first-hand experience of the workplace" as well as "everyone to get support tailored to their circumstances".

According to a Mencap study (2017) "just 6% of people with learning disabilities are in employment, despite 60% wanting to and being able to be in work".

By using the Gatsby Charitable Foundation's Benchmarks and the Compass online self-evaluation tool we will be able to develop and improve our careers provision. Whilst the Gatsby benchmarks are not a statutory framework, by adopting them, we can be confident that we are fulfilling our legal duties of offering secure, independent careers guidance.

At Our Place Schools, we will begin this journey by using the Compass careers benchmark tool to baseline ourselves and then use the information provided to improve our careers programme and track our progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks over time, and in line with the Government's expectation of the end of 2020. The SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit will be supportive in enabling all of our pupils to develop their skills and outlook they need to achieve career wellbeing, including adaptability and resilience.

The Gatsby Benchmarks are:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

Using these benchmarks as well as the Career Development Institute's "Framework for careers, employability and enterprise education" (March 2018) should give us the breadth of knowledge and experience to produce the best outcomes for our pupils.

This should be started at KS2 and worked on throughout the key stages, up until post-16. The Framework is split into seventeen end of key stage learning outcomes and group into "Developing yourself through careers, employability and enterprise education"; "learning about careers and the world of work"; and "developing your career management, employability and enterprise skills".

The seventeen areas of learning are as follows:

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-determination
3. Self-improvement as a learner
4. Exploring careers and career development
5. Investigating work and working life
6. Understanding business and industry
7. Investigating jobs and labour market information (LMI)
8. Valuing equality, diversity and inclusion
9. Learning about safe working practices and environments
10. Making the most of careers information, advice and guidance
11. Preparing for employability
12. Showing initiative and enterprise
13. Developing personal finance capability
14. Identifying choices and opportunities
15. Planning and deciding
16. Handling applications and interviews
17. Managing changes and transitions

### **Supported internships**

“Supported internships are a structured study programme based primarily at an employer. They enable young people aged 16-24 with a statement of SEN (up to age 19) or an EHC plan (up to age 25) to achieve sustainable paid employment by those equipping them with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace. Those young people on supported internships would be meeting their duty to participate. Supported internship providers are included in the requirement to notify a local authority if a young person is no longer participating” Section 13 DfE statutory guidance of “Participation of young people in education, employment or training” (Sept 2016).

### **Curriculum Organisation for our Post 16 pupils**

Historically, our post 16 pupils attend school four days a week, which meets the definition of full-time participation from the DfE statutory guidance of “Participation of young people in education, employment or training” (Sept 2016) of 18 hours per week.

## Accreditation options

### ASDAN

ASDAN have a range of courses which are specifically designed for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

- **New Horizons:** New Horizons is an activity-based curriculum for those aged 9-13 with SEND. Learners cover a range of areas including PSHE, Citizenship and transition.
- **Transition Challenge:** Transition Challenge provides an activity-based curriculum to support learners aged 14-16 with SEND.
  - ◊ The Sensory Programme recognises small steps of achievement for those with significant learning difficulties.
  - ◊ The Introduction and Progression programme is linked to curriculum areas such as English, mathematics, science, ICT, citizenship and work-related.
- **Workright:** Workright has been designed for learners aged 14+ with SEND that are following a work-related or work based programme of study. It supports learners in developing a range of transferable employability skills.
- **Towards Independence:** Towards Independence provides an activity-based curriculum to support learners aged 14 and over with SEND. It comprises of more than 70 modules to develop learners' personal, social, independent living and work-related skills.
- **Entry 1 qualification in Personal Progress:** The Personal Progress qualifications have been developed for learners working at Entry 1 and below. A choice of units is available, covering the following topics: literacy, numeracy and ICT; independent living skills; personal development; community participation; and preparation for work.
- **Focus:** Focus comprises of 12 modules that have been designed for learners aged 14+ with additional needs, specifically those who are learning in a domestic setting. Modules can be undertaken separately and built into a profile of achievement. For each module, learners' complete activities and gather evidence to demonstrate their progress and skill development in a particular area, such as communication and numeracy, independent living, work-related learning or sport and leisure.
- **Entry Level Award, Certificate and Diploma in Personal Progress:** These have been developed so that learners working between P Levels 1-8 and Entry 1 can have their achievements recognised within a qualification framework. The Personal Progress qualifications span a wide range of achievement from the ability to encounter experiences to the ability to apply basic skills, knowledge and understanding to a range of familiar experiences. These qualifications are available for learners pre and post-16 and can be undertaken in schools, colleges, residential centres, training providers and independent provision.

## **8 - Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:**

At Our Place Schools the success of our Curriculum will be evaluated in a number of ways:

- Feedback from our pupils themselves.
- Observation and assessment of our pupil's engagement levels.
- By monitoring the self-esteem of pupils and staff
- Achievement of outcomes set for individual pupils (Assess, plan, Do, Review Cycle).
- Pupil progress.
- Lesson observations.
- Networking with other providers.
- Engaging positively with regulators
- Feedback from our staff, parents, Social Workers, Virtual School Teachers, LA representatives etc
- At least six Monitoring Visits (announced and unannounced) over the course of an academic year, with subsequent reports - made by the Governance and Leadership Group / Social Workers / other agencies
- Work scrutiny.
- Planning.
- Internal and External moderation of work across the whole curriculum. (External moderation as part of the Cross Local Authority Moderation group at Forest Oak School, Solihull).

All teaching staff (teachers and teaching assistants) are expected to read and follow this policy. The senior leadership team are responsible for ensuring this policy is followed.

## **9 - Reporting to parents and key stakeholders:**

A copy of the Curriculum Policy is available to see on our website, and an annual copy will be sent to parents, care staff, Virtual Schools and Social Workers. The Head of Education will report on the management and progress of the policy to the Governance and Leadership Group annually. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of Education and the Governance and Leadership Group to ensure it is fit for purpose.

## **10 - Links with other policies / documents:**

This Curriculum policy is linked to:

- The Assessment policy.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities policy.
- The Behaviour policy.
- The 2019 / 2020 Curriculum Vision Map.
- The Curriculum Topic Cycle 2019 – 2020.
- Post 16 and Careers Education Policy.



## 11 - References:

- McInerney, D. (2015). Motivation for effective learning: Cognitive perspectives. In S. Phillipson, M. Pruyn & M. Gindidis (Comp.) Understanding Learning (pp.96-136). Sydney. NSW: Pearson Australia.
- The Children Act, 2004.
- 'The Independent School Standards, advice for Independent Schools' March 2018, 'Residential Special School, National Minimum Standards' 2015.
- The Equality Act 2010. · The Thrive Approach (<https://www.thriveapproach.com/>) · The TEACCH Values (<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/teacch.aspx>) · The ABA approach (<https://www.childautism.org.uk/about-autism/applied-behaviour-analysis-aba-and-autism/>)
- National Curriculum 2014.
- The improvement points stated by Ofsted in their report, September 2018.
- The improvement points stated by Ofsted in their report following the monitoring visit, July 2019.