



Arbour House

Curriculum overview policy

Policy updated: 20/11/16

Curriculum Overview

1. Introduction

Arbour House School aims to provide a bespoke broad and balanced range of learning experiences across the school day for pupils with complex social and communication learning needs particularly autism. The additional needs of these pupils require a modified curriculum, which meets the individual needs of each pupil. The school aims to give pupils the skills and knowledge that will enable them to become valued members of society. We have developed an innovative approach to education. It is based upon best practice taken from several well-validated compatible pedagogies: TEACCH, SCERTS, PECS and Sensory Integration. A creative approach is taken to implementing the curriculum. The emphasis is on the acquisition of functional skills and life-centred education which equips pupils with the skills needed for adult life and work.

2. The curriculum overview

Learning takes place in a safe and functional environment that is consistent and predictable. Teaching is highly structured, based on the TEACCH approach, and includes positive behaviour support.

Teaching within the school is bespoke to meet the individual strengths and learning. The teaching of new skills and concepts is approached through individual teaching or small group situations. All those who come into contact with the pupils play an important role in developing skills, knowledge and understanding. Staff, parents and other professionals work closely together to plan and implement a consistent, stimulating and appropriate curriculum.

All students have access to an appropriate curriculum according to their interests and learning needs which has been carefully assessed upon entering the school. After base-line assessment pupils are placed on one of three curriculum pathways:-

- Pathway 1 - Developmental curriculum;
- Pathway 2 - Adapted P scale curriculum;
- Pathway 3 - Adapted national curriculum.

Pupils are able to move from one pathway to another at any point during the year following an updated assessment.

All curriculum pathways are delivered through project themes for each term. This approach continues until Year 9.

From Year 9 the curriculum places a greater emphasis on work related learning and skills needed for a fulfilling adult life and employment.

3. Curriculum Planning up to Year 9

The school places great emphasis on the acquisition of language and communication, literacy and numeracy. The school takes a multi-sensory and functional approach to the Literacy and Numeracy curriculum. To support the acquisition of literacy skills we use 'Read Write Inc' and Numicom to teach numerical skills. Communication is taught throughout the day using a very structured approach - PECS for those children who are developing communication skills and a structured functional communicate programme to bring children up to typically developing peers. We use programmes of study in the 2014 National Curriculum and Performance Attainment Targets (P Scales).

Life-Centred Education takes a functional approach to the teaching of Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship Education including Emotional Literacy is equal emphasis to acquisition of literacy and numerical skills. The school uses SEAL and National Curriculum programmes of study as well as Performance Attainment Targets (P Scales) as the basis for their curriculum. It is taught through real life situations and in a functional way.

At our school we take a creative approach to the teaching of Science, History, Geography, Art, and Design Technology. Each year group has specific themes which form the basis of termly or half-termly curriculum plans.

Not every subject is covered each term – instead we make links between children's learning around a central idea which takes account of individual strengths and interests. The content for the subjects within the themes are selected from the programmes of study in the 2014 National Curriculum and Performance Attainment Targets (P Scales).

4. Curriculum Planning in Years 9, 10 and 11

The curriculum across Years 9, 10 and 11 focus on functional skills needed to move into post 16 education and training. Functional literacy, numeracy and ICT are fundamental to the next stage of education. Where possible pupils will undertake Entry level qualifications when they are ready. If a pupil has a particular interest in a particular subject and is able to take a formal qualification then the school will seek to ensure that the relevant tutors are available to teach the subject at Arbour House and pupils have the opportunity to sit qualifications at a local examination centre.

The emphasis is on developing skills for life and work using Life Centered Education (LCE) Transition Curriculum. Travel training focusses at this stage on developing independence and confidence in moving around a pupil's local and wider community.

5. **Pathway 1 - Developmental curriculum**

This curriculum is based on the Multi Sensory Impairment (MSI) curriculum developed by Victoria School, Birmingham and is used for those pupils entering with a very low base-line assessment.

This developmental curriculum, is aimed to assist pupils' development in a multi-sensory way. This may be by helping pupils to acquire the concepts and strategies used by typically developing children, or by identifying and teaching alternative strategies and concepts which will perform the same functions. Like other recently-developed curriculum and assessment materials for pupils with complex needs, the MSI Unit Curriculum is rooted in a transactional model of development emphasising interaction between the individual and the environment.

The curriculum uses a creative approach to the delivery with keyworkers advocating for individual pupils in terms of interests. This is the basis for experiences and resources for the delivery of the curriculum.

Communication

A range of strategies and programmes are used in the teaching of communication. These include:-

- Intensive Interaction is used to develop communicative behaviour and relationships;
- Attention Autism is used to also develop communication skills as well as pre-requisite skills for learning
- PECS
- Signalong

Assessment

The progress of pupils within each Phase 2 and 3 are recorded using the Phase Profile. The Profiles consist of 'typical achievements' which suggest that the pupil has mastered the skills, concepts and global understanding associated with the phases. There is no attempt to list all relevant achievements, and some of the items listed are specific to the MSI Unit Curriculum. The Profile are criterion-referenced measures of progress, not developmental checklists.

For each typical achievement, three levels of mastery are recorded:

- Aware – the pupil shows signs of being ready to learn the ability;
- Achieved in specific contexts – the pupil consistently uses the ability in some, but not all, relevant situations;
- Generalized – the pupil consistently uses the ability in all appropriate situations.

The emphasis on generalization is because this is a particular problem for pupils who have complex social and communication needs particularly within this stage, and one of the reasons why they tend to show considerable peaks and troughs on assessment scales.

Pupils generally work within one Phase. They may work across two Phases as they reach the end of Phase 2 or if they have specific areas of high ability.

A range of other assessment strategies may be used to complement this. *See Assessment procedures.*

6. Pathway 2 - Adapted P Scale curriculum

Pupils up to Year 9 will follow a revised National Curriculum which is based on Performance - P Scale - attainment targets for pupils with special educational needs. This curriculum will be individually tailored to meet pupils' interests and learning needs. Pupils will be fully involved in the planning of their curriculum based on themes and bespoke topics. Teacher and support staff will act as advocates for pupils with limited communication.

Personal and social interaction is based on Social and Emotional Aspect of Learning (SEAL) curriculum materials and Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) materials. Emotional literacy will be taught on a daily basis from qualified ELSAs.

Life-Centred Education is an integral part of the overall curriculum and makes up 50% of the timetable. It incorporates Personal Social Health Citizenship Education (PSHCE), travel training and employment skills. Pupils up to Year 9 will follow an adapted National Curriculum which is based on Performance - P Scale - attainment targets for pupils with special educational needs and will be individually tailored to meet pupils' interests and learning needs.

At Year 9 pupils will continue to follow a revised National Curriculum which is based on Performance - P Scale - attainment targets for pupils with special educational needs but the emphasis will be on Functional Literacy, Numeracy and ICT. These subjects will be integrated into a Life-Centred curriculum which will include work related learning, leisure skills and travel training. *See Pathway 3 Life-Centred Curriculum.*

Assessment

Specific assessment of key curriculum areas is supported by rigorous gathering, recording and reporting of small step achievements towards the levels in English, Mathematics and PSHE.

7. Pathway 3 - Adapted National curriculum

Pupils up to Year 9 will follow an adapted National Curriculum which will be individually tailored to meet pupils' interests and learning needs. Pupils will be fully involved in the planning of their curriculum based on themes and bespoke topics.

Personal and Social interaction is based on Social and Emotional Aspect of Learning (SEAL) curriculum materials and Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) materials. Emotional literacy will be taught on a daily basis from qualified ELSAs.

Life-Centred Education which incorporates Personal Social Health Citizenship Education (PSHCE) will make up 50% and will include travel training and employment skills. Pupils up to Year 9 will follow an adapted National Curriculum which will be individually tailored to meet pupils' interests and learning needs.

At Year 9 pupils will use AQA Functional English, Mathematics and ICT programme of study to gain Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications as and when individuals are ready. If a pupil has a particular interest in a particular subject and is able to take a formal qualification then the school will seek to ensure that the relevant tutors are available to teach the subject at Arbour House and pupils have the opportunity to sit qualifications at a local examination centre.

Life-Centred Curriculum

The life skills curriculum focuses on teaching skills that are chronologically age-appropriate and immediately useful to the pupil. Objectives are based on prior learning and task analysis of the skills needed to achieve specific outcomes. The curriculum emphasizes effective participation in all of life's occupations. This starts as soon as a pupil enters school and continues into adulthood. Life-Centred Education (LCE) model identifies 20 major competencies needed for effective functioning in school, family and community. These skills are divided into three areas:

- Daily living
- Personal / social, Self Determination and Interpersonal skills
- Vocational and Employment skills

Arbour House school will use these key areas and competencies as the basis of preparing pupils to use the Transition Life-Centred Education curriculum at Year 9. Our earlier curriculum (Years 1 – 8) will focus on the following areas:-

Daily Living Skills

- Money
- Household skills

- Looking after myself
- Shopping and Food preparation
- Dressing and looking after my clothes
- Citizenship
- Leisure activities
- Travel training

Personal / social skills

- Building self esteem
- Self awareness
- Developing good relationships
- Communication with others
- Making good decisions
- Social awareness
- Understanding rights and responsibilities

Vocational

- What is work and employment
- Exploring employment choices
- Developing Work related skills
- Work experience

Year 9

There emphasis at this stage is on developing life and work related skills. Pupils will follow the LCE curriculum.

Research-based and developed by a CEC-led task force of leading transition professionals, the LCE curriculum is designed for students who have learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and students whose ability to live independently is in question.

LCE identifies three critical domains for adult living in the 21st century - **daily living skills, self determination and interpersonal skills, and employment skills.**

- **Daily Living Skills** - how to manage personal finances (including using credit cards, check cards, etc.), household management, personal needs, family responsibilities, food preparation, citizenship responsibility and leisure activities
- **Self Determination and Interpersonal Skills** - develop self-awareness, self-confidence, socially responsible behavior, good interpersonal skills, independence, decision-making and good communication skills.

- **Employment Skills** - appropriate work habits, how to seek and maintain employment, physical/manual skills, and specific job competencies.

LCE further divides these domains into 20 competencies and 94 sub-competencies, further broken down by objective. Within each objective are at least three [lesson plans](#) that follow an Awareness, Explanation, Preparation (AEP) learning sequence to ensure true content mastery. Many lesson plans have accompanying fact sheets, worksheets and other activities to provide additional engaging and meaningful learning activities. View the entire [LCE Curriculum Matrix](#) to see the depth and breadth of the curriculum as a whole.

Although much of the LCE instruction will occur in school, a considerable amount of home and community-based experience is included. Due to the nature of life skills instruction and the linkages to the state common core standards, the concept of "infusion" is encouraged - that is, teaching the competencies in academic classes and inclusive classrooms.

Assessment

The LCE assessment instruments enable the school to:

- Establish present levels of student competency
- Determine IEP (Individual Education Program) goals and objectives
- Guide program planning and instructional content
- Measure student progress toward instructional goals

LCE includes three types of field-tested assessment instruments - competency rating scale, knowledge battery, and performance battery.

The LCE Competency Rating Scale (CRS) provides a valuable method for assessing each student's competency level through observation and interviews using a person who knows the student well, such as a teacher or parent. This informal and brief assessment process offers a relatively high degree of validity, and it may be used at all instructional levels.

The LCE Knowledge Battery is a criterion-referenced test designed as a pre- and post-assessment instrument to identify instructional needs.

The LCE Knowledge Battery consists of a 468-item multiple-choice test covering all LCE objectives within each sub-competency. And teachers may choose which sub-competency sections to test knowledge levels and instructional needs.

The LCE Performance Battery assesses a pupils' ability to *apply* the LCE competencies in their lives. It consists of two alternate forms for each of the 20 competency units. Most items are performance-based and composed as open-ended questions, role-playing scenarios, card-sorting exercises and other hands-on activities.

8. Review and Evaluation

The curriculum is reviewed annually and in line with the pupils accessing their different areas of learning. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for the co-ordination, development, delivery and evaluation of the curriculum

whilst ensuring its relevance, breadth, balance and progression through the school. Teachers have a responsibility for the development of specific areas of the curriculum and for ensuring the correct identification and use of resources.