



Curriculum Policy

Introduction

The Beeches Independent School is a special needs school which provides personalised education for students with a range of learning disabilities. Many of our students have a diagnosis of ASD and associated conditions and some are non-verbal or experience barriers to communication.

Our emphasis is on creating an inclusive curriculum with learning experiences which serve to progress the skill set of each learner, whatever their ability. Our curriculum content is relevant and purposeful and provides learning to impact a lifetime, with EHCP objectives underpinning all we do. Skills learnt are transferable, with appropriate planning and support, into the home, the local community and future placements. The Beeches Independent School offers a safe and secure environment where each pupil is valued and is encouraged to participate as fully as possible.

Curriculum Overview

The Beeches Independent School is committed to providing an engaging and influential curriculum for each of our young people. Our ethos is that all students are able to make progress and achieve, whatever their ability. It is our role to facilitate learning opportunities and to think outside the box in order to provide the most valuable experiences for our students. Stemming from individual needs and experiences, the active curriculum is responsive and adaptive to provide the skills and knowledge for life-long learning. Above all, it is our aim for our students to enjoy their learning and to thrive in a supportive and warm environment.

The curriculum we follow focuses on the National Curriculum objectives at Primary and Secondary levels. Students follow personalised and active schemes of work which accommodate and counter barriers to learning to promote inclusive learning opportunities. We offer a broad range of subject areas to all learners and ensure that all we do is fair and purposeful. Therapeutic input and a range of trips and visits allow for a holistic experience to be provided, meeting the diverse needs of all learners.

Here at The Beeches Independent School, our learners are:

B - brave

Our students are encouraged to approach their learning with a 'can do' attitude and to take sensible risks. We embrace both physical and mental challenges to strive to achieve all possibilities.

E - experimental

Our teachers facilitate experimental and exploratory learning across the curriculum and in extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Students are encouraged to explore and to reach conclusions independently and to follow processes to reach their goals.

E - enjoyable

Our curriculum content encompasses many themes to appeal to the interests of all learners. Teaching staff aim to excite their learners, promoting interest in their subject area and sustain the learner's interests in a range of experiences.

C - creative

Our curriculum embraces talents and interests to incorporate the skills of our young people. A variety of learning experiences inside and outside of the classroom setting allow for student preferences to be accommodated.

H - holistic

Our curriculum celebrates the whole person, aiming to bring together a range of learning and experiences to enhance the quality of life for each of our young people. With Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education spanning the curriculum, we provide learning opportunities focused on respect towards self and others. We encourage our students to become reflective learners who are mindful about their experiences.

E - environmentally aware

Our learning inside and out of the classroom serves our students with the ability to become responsible citizens of the world, understanding the impact of their own actions, and those of others, on the environment. Focusing on the natural world and materials, both natural and man-made, our students are able to understand the need to care for the environment for life.

S - skilled

Our learning experiences aim to furnish our young people with the skills required to become as independent as possible and to be able to make informed and measured choices for themselves. We aim to ensure that individuals are equipped with problem solving skills which can help keep them safe as they grow.

Implementation

Our curriculum implements thematic study to enhance the holistic experience of our learners with cross-curricular learning promoting shared experiences. It should have the following characteristics: breadth, balance, relevance, differentiation, progression, continuity and coherence.

Planned as half-termly schemes of work, the curriculum is based on Cornerstones, a primary-based resource system and develops into a fully comprehensive KS4 curriculum that is shaped around the needs and interests of the individual. The emphasis of lessons is on learning practical knowledge which is transferrable to a wide range of learning and which will have a positive impact on adulthood.

The curriculum is tailored to the individual needs of the pupil and is supported through a communication-centred environment to encourage choice making, social and vocational skills, developing self-care and life skills and self-managing behaviour. Understanding is supported through the use of pictorial support and a hands-on approach. 1:1 support is consistently available, but we encourage our students to work with others in small groups when appropriate.

Our practice is multi-sensory, language centred and connective; school staff differentiate accordingly to include a more sensory approach to learning where possible. Students' progress is constantly monitored through a programme of continuous assessment, both formative and summative. Learning is the process through which the students can develop their knowledge, skill and understanding to the point where they have retained and generalised what has been taught. Teaching and learning is carried out in a context which is relevant and meaningful to all students on the autistic spectrum to ensure effective learning and appropriate accreditation. Our active schemes of work are created to be responsive to the needs of students and staff are reflective, allowing for truly personalised learning.

All staff will work in such a way that the learning environment is one which is calm and consistent, with clear communication to students about what is expected of them, both in a group and as individuals.

Key Stage 2 (Year 5 / 6)

The Beeches offers learning in line with the National Curriculum objectives for pupils entering at age 9. The curriculum is tailored to the individual needs of the pupil and is supported through a communication - centered environment. Classes are taught in core and non- core foundation subjects: Literacy, Numeracy, Humanities (History, Geography and Religious Education), Science, MFL (French), Design technology, ICT, Art, Music and Physical Education.

Key Stage 3

Students in Key Stage 3 are offered opportunities to practice what they have learnt in a classroom setting in the world outside, thereby consolidating their understanding. This is achieved in a wide variety of ways during the latter part of the school day when pupils are involved in activities in the community around the school, educational trips, sporting activities (using local sports facilities) and involvement with their peers, both from The Beeches Independent School and, wherever possible and if appropriate, from other local schools. The curriculum at The Beeches Independent School addresses the main areas of impairment of autism alongside each student's individual academic achievement. We ensure that education is

delivered effectively in an environment which is communication –focused, whilst delivering highly structured and focused lessons which ensure students continue to progress in all areas; social and emotional, cognitive and behavioural and physical.

This stage of the curriculum should prepare the pupils for the coming years of gaining qualifications and accreditation; it also helps teachers to develop an in-depth knowledge of each student's 'spiky profile' of abilities so that the school is then able to develop strengths whilst accommodating a variety of needs.

Key Stage 4

In Key Stage 4 the structure of the curriculum continues to follow the National Curriculum and lessons are structured accordingly; teaching is very focused on delivering these requirements whilst also equally taking into account individual differences, abilities and interests in learning. Along with the core subjects; English, Maths, Science and ICT, students are offered options in a variety of subjects and skills at different levels according to ability. These optional subjects include: History, Geography, Art, and Food Technology. PSHE is included for all students and encompasses life skills, citizenship and work-related learning. All pupils are taught PE as a foundation to keeping fit and healthy and to encourage involvement in sporting activities outside of school time.

The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is structured towards learning the skills required by students who have autism to ensure a better quality of life for them in the future; emphasis is placed therefore on literacy, numeracy and Life Skills throughout the curriculum. Emphasis will also be given to areas of study which will help students to achieve independence after they leave The Beeches Independent School. Their study will also include Careers Guidance, independent Living Skills and, where possible, appropriate work experience placements. The school also offers pupils the opportunity to take examinations and accreditations at a variety of levels including AQA Unit Awards, GCSE, and Functional Skills Entry Level qualifications, depending on the ability of the student.

Students in Key Stages 4 are given many opportunities to practice what they learn in the school setting, as well as in the world outside school. This is achieved through involvement in the local community around the school, structured work experience, the use of local sporting facilities and involvement with peers through visits to other school level activities and colleges and sports club/ team activities. For those pupils who are able and wish to follow a higher level of education arrangement will be made to study at a local college or specialist teaching would be provided.

Post 16 Study

Our Post-16 offer varies according to the needs, abilities and interests of the student. Studies at Key Stage 5 comprise of: functional literacy and numeracy, emotional literacy, effective communication, independent living and preparing for adulthood, budgeting and finances, healthy relationships and sex education, personal development of interests and skills, employability skills and work experience.

Phonics within our curriculum

Aims

- To teach pupils aural discrimination, phonemic awareness and rhyme awareness in order to encourage good spelling
- To encourage repetition and consolidation, so that spelling becomes automatic
- To encourage pupils to segment and blend
- To learn to read and write all 44 graphemes in the English language
- To teach pupils specific strategies to help them remember tricky words
- To ensure that the teaching of phonics is lively, interactive and investigative
- To encourage pupils to apply their phonic skills in all curriculum areas

Differentiation

We aim to encourage all pupils to reach their full potential through the provision of varied opportunities to access phonics. We recognize that our phonics planning must allow pupils to gain a progressively deeper understanding of the phonetic structure of the English language as they move through the school to ensure all pupils are provided with the key tools needed to become a fluent reader. Careful thought will be given to the provision of appropriately structured work for pupils with SEND. The school has a variety of strategies to enable all pupils to have increased access to the curriculum through broad-based, multi-sensory, visual, auditory and kinaesthetically lesson planning.

Curriculum implications for each subject area for the school's group of students

English: Planning and delivery of the English curriculum considers the potential barriers that our students face when accessing language in all its forms. Although reading, writing, speaking and listening form the basis of the English curriculum, care is taken to ensure learning is accessible for all the students at The Beeches Independent School. For example, discussion is supported using pictures, symbols and questioning and takes place in a risk-free environment. Reading is encouraged though not forced and material is chosen or created to match the abilities of the students. Students access a variety of text types, encompassing social issues and challenging themes, as appropriate. Writing is supported with prompt questions, the use of dictionaries and phonics, writing frames and one-to-one support. For our non-verbal and/or less able students, material is matched to meet the individual needs of the students. For example, matching and grouping pictures and/or words, tracing over letters instead of writing free-hand and the use of keyboards and technology are some examples of how the curriculum is built to meet the needs of our students.

Maths: The use of numeracy is linked to life skills and to work towards independence. Although some work is completed on paper, many resources are used to meet the varying needs of the students at The Beeches Independent Special

School. Maths is a subject that makes use of a range of real-life scenarios and tangible resources to allow students to make progress in the study of number, shape, volume and value. Students work one-to-one or in small groups, often pairs, to make progress in a risk-free and supportive environment.

Science: Learning in Science is accompanied by a range of picture-rich resources to support students' learning. Topics in Science are chosen to teach students about how science affects them and their lives, as well as to appeal to interests held by many of the young people. Written work is supported by key words and writing frames. The curriculum also aims to introduce students to influential scientists in history.

Food Technology: Planning and delivery considers the varying needs and abilities of our young people. Practical lessons require one-to-one supervision and close adherence to and observation of risk assessments. Understanding of SPD (Sensory Processing Disorder) ensures that teachers handle sensory issues sensitively. Planning caters to the strengths, interests and barriers that our young people have whilst also maintaining the desire to promote and encourage a move towards independence. For example, learning is linked to budgeting and the Eat Well Pate Recipes are utilised to develop students' own tastes and budget.

Zones: This timetabled lesson exists in response to the complex and differing needs of the young people at The Beeches Independent School. Planning uses pictures and moving image text to work towards supporting students in understanding non-verbal communication and being able to respond in different social situations, as well as learning and practising appropriate reactions when faced with their own emotions. Zones seeks to support everyone to move towards regulating their own emotions and this is in direct response to the needs of the students that attend our school.

Art and Design: Students are given the opportunity to use a range of creative processes and products with planning seeking to effectively meet the sensory needs of the individuals. This means that tasks and creativity are differentiated at the most primary level. Teachers also look to facilitate students in forging independent preference through experimentation.

Humanities: Teaching and learning makes use of range of picture- based and moving image texts to support students in accessing times and places that are beyond that which they already know. We know that our students may struggle to accurately picture and understand that which they have not seen or experienced, thus every effort is taken to bring different historical periods and times of the past to life, and the same approach is taken to geographical features and areas around the world.

ICT: Planning seeks to ensure that students are taught and practise skills which will benefit them and support a move towards to independence in the future. We understand that the practical element of ICT lends itself to supporting our learners. We also understand the increased need to ensure that we keep our young people safe through close supervision of their use of technology and the internet, with closely monitored filters and controls.

PHSE: We recognise the importance of physical and mental health, alcohol and drug education, relationships (and sex) education, economic wellbeing and careers and we also recognise the sensitivity that the prescribed curriculum should be delivered with. We understand that many of our students are directly affected by some or all the topics that will be covered through the curriculum. Therefore, planning is student-centred, and delivery is differentiated, taking into consideration the past experiences of our young people and the best ways in which to support them moving forward. For that reason, these topics are delivered to these students by the Head of Education who is also the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Physical Education: We recognise that our students may have physical barriers to participating in physical activity, or conditions that may require close monitoring during periods of activity. We are also aware that many of our students display behaviour that challenges and that this means that off-site visits and activities need to be staffed at least one-to-one. We plan activities to meet the capabilities and interests of our students, as well as developing their fitness and social skills.

Impact

The curriculum will ensure that students are able to process information and maximise the learning experience throughout each day allowing them to realise their full potential, whatever level of ability. Earning tokens as a reward for successful behaviour for learning will allow students to acknowledge and aspire to our desired academic excellence. Targets set through EHC Plans will be met in a timely manner to demonstrate progression.

The curriculum design across all age ranges connects each student with the acquisition of knowledge, skill and understanding related to minimising the effects of their barriers to learning. This design makes meaningful connections for students which maximises their potential for success, access and independence.

Teachers develop assessment where evidence is moderated each half term to form robust judgements about standards of achievement for each pupil in each subject. Data is reported formally at three points in the year to form our assessment process. Data and information can also be sought from staff when necessary for the compilation of education reports to reflect effectively on progress for external agencies and stakeholders.

It is our expectation that learning towards independence and life skills will enhance our students' quality of life. We aim to give a wide range of opportunities to experience employability skills which promotes their prospects for the future. Our students will be exposed to learning opportunities which can lead to accreditation and, where possible, formal qualifications, to further enhance their life prospects and to recognise their successes.

By encouraging our pupils to play a full and active role in the community of the school, and also the local community, it is hoped that they develop a feeling of being a part of our world. This will help them to integrate more easily amongst others when moving on into adult life.

The curriculum is subject to regularly planned and spontaneous and active evaluation and review. The school aims to celebrate learning with parents, carers and other stakeholders such as social workers. We regularly invite people into the school to view the students' work, enjoy performances and to raise money for charities through enterprise; thus celebrating achievements.

Pupils with additional needs

For those students attending The Beeches have an Education, Health and Care Plan which often specifies therapeutic input into their curriculum e.g. the provision of Speech and Language Therapy; we ensure that such provisions are met. Although not a therapeutic school, we have strong links with external agencies to provide support where relevant eg, Occupational Therapy, or Speech and Language. If it is considered by The Beeches staff that the needs of students with additional needs are not being provided for adequately, we will liaise with the placing authority to ensure that their EHCP reflects their true needs. Referrals to outside agencies to support the social and emotional learning of our young people will be sought; this serves to have a positive impact on the learning experiences of our students.

Whole School Ethos

The purpose of the holistic curriculum is to help students to:

- Develop an understanding of the world in which they live
- Have a shared respect for the school and wider environment
- Have sound numeracy and literacy and ICT skills
- Develop personal and moral values, respect for shared values and for other cultures, religions and ways of life
- Acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and a world of rapid and continuous technological change
- Take their place in society as informed, confident and responsible citizens
- Make healthy choices and to stay safe in a range of contexts
- Become confident individuals and world-wide citizens

Enrichment

Trips and Visits

A key part of the teaching and learning at The Beeches Independent School will be carried out through a wide variety of afternoon visits and activities. Each afternoon offers one hour of wider learning through PE, Enrichment and Assembly. One half day per week allows for us to run educational trips and visits. Such trips will include sites of cultural and historical interest as well as more practical visits to shops, local services (e.g. Fire Station, Police Station, the Cathedral etc.) and recreational pursuits including bowling, pitch and putt, fruit picking (followed by jam-making) and time at the seaside.

PHSE and SMSC

PHSE and Social Moral Spiritual and Cultural education are delivered through the curriculum areas and through the assembly programme. Students are exposed to many opportunities to learn about the world around them through classroom activities, collapsed days, assembly topics and through trips and visits to local places of interest and worship.

Young people's achievements are celebrated regularly through classroom displays, presentations and cultural events. We have high expectations of our students in all areas of their lives. We celebrate their achievements and progress in a multitude of ways within both education and residential departments on a daily and weekly basis. This can take the form of verbal or written praise, tokens awarded for the reward system, certificates and personally chosen rewards. Our WOW system celebrates social skills and recognises progress on a personal level; evidence for this is collated in each student's Personal Development Record. Parents and carers are also welcomed into the school formally and informally to come and speak with teachers and to view their child's progress.

Careers Information and Guidance

Curriculum guidance is offered to all students from Year 9 onwards, although opportunities to include this learning in the curriculum before this time are given where appropriate. Our guidance includes, the school careers library, display information, attendance to careers fairs and open days where appropriate, two hours of formal careers learning per half term and access to work experience opportunities where relevant.

Responsibilities and Roles

The Head of Education:

The Head of Education, assisted by the Deputy Head of Education, has overall responsibility for the Curriculum and overseeing the delivery of the Creative Curriculum through:

- Regular formal and informal discussions with staff
- Monitoring planning to ensure curriculum coverage
- Observing learning and teaching to ensure progress is being made within the topics
- Regular reviews of the curriculum through regular open dialogue with staff and pupils
- Making changes where necessary
- Formulating an action plan to move the school forward
- Seeking the students' views about their learning experiences
- Management and allocation of resources as well as whole school curriculum enrichment opportunities

Teaching Staff are:

- Responsible for the planning and delivery of the curriculum on a day-to-day basis
- Responsible to the Head of Education to create effectively sequences and coherent long-term planning
- Responsible for exploring cross-curricular links where appropriate.
- Expected to mark students' work to emphasise success and set appropriate next steps targets
- Responsible for making amendments to planning in order to optimise learning opportunities when they arise
- Expected to differentiate resources and lesson content to accommodate the individual's learning needs
- Expected to use a range of teaching and learning strategies
- Encouraged to promote celebration of successes by recording achievements appropriately and in a timely manner
- Required to attend all training opportunities given and seek further training where relevant to their subject area / skills set
- Required to provide accurate information on students as requested eg, educational reports, annual report, weekly reports, assessment grids
- Required to adhere to risk assessments to ensure that the learning spaces of the school are welcoming, conducive to the learning experience and safe for all learners
- Expected to model appropriate behaviours towards learning opportunities and become good role models
- Required to ensure that the safety and well-being of all learners is optimized

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review takes place on a daily basis and any necessary adaptations are made to address immediate concerns or issues. The curriculum will be reviewed half termly on completion of schemes of work and the Head of Education will review planning from subject teachers in order to monitor the quality, level and suitability of work planned for the half term ahead. Reviews of the curriculum will also be made in response to new legislation or, in particular Key Stage 4/5, should new opportunities for certification or accreditation be made available.

Please be aware that delivery of off-site visits and curriculum complement trips and visits are subject to Covid-19 regulations. This means that not all areas of the policy are fully operational as The Beeches Independent School adheres strictly to government guidance on expected practice.

Reviewed by: Emma Sutters **Date:** May 2021 **Review:** May 2022