



Inspiring Brighter Futures

Curriculum Design in more Depth & Breadth: September 2021

Curriculum Intent

At Meadowside School our curriculum **intent** is to ensure that the learning journey our pupils take through their education is learner-centred, informed by the EHCP, their and their family's aspirations, in Preparation towards Adulthood.

Ensuring access to a relevant and fluid curriculum model (Informal, Semi-Formal, Formal, Survival), and 14-19 Progression Pathways, (Core, Vocational, Life and Social), we aim to achieve outstanding outcomes to develop each pupil's academic achievement, personal development, independence, engagement, social development and build their cultural capital, as they transition through school and move towards the choices of adulthood.

Our **intent** is that if a child can't learn the way we teach, we should teach the way they learn, hence our school vision: "Inspiring Brighter Futures" and our mission for Meadowside School to be "The Place to Shine".

Our Governors, Senior Leadership Team, Middle leadership Team, Teachers and support staff team are all committed to providing curricular and learning environments that can extend individual achievement and meet the needs of our pupils. Having researched a wide variety of curricular models and teaching approaches, trialed strategies and approaches, we believe that our curricular ensure access to relevant learning opportunities and to achievement for all our pupils.

Penny Lacey, worked to create a new curriculum model based on a personalised approach to learning, suggesting that curricular design for children and young people with complex learning difficulties needs to be constructed around "communication" and "cognition".

She and subsequently Northern Ireland's education system, Diane Rochford, Equals and Barry Carpenter, advocated a "move away from a National Curriculum perspective to a developmental perspective", with "communication" and "cognition" as the principal concepts explicitly taught. For many young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, subjects such as history and music should serve to provide a context/vehicle for learning "communication" and "cognition", rather than represent the focus of learning.

At Meadowside, the extent to which non-neuro-typical learners engage with the National Curriculum, needed to vary, according to their achievements and diverse range of needs. Our **intent** is to provide our pupils with experiences that are relevant, interesting and challenging, and to identify opportunities for

repetition as well as progression. We have created a curriculum structure which encompasses 4 fluid spirals: 'Informal' (PMLD Sensory Curriculum), 'Semi-formal' (a curriculum for those who need teaching to be based around their uniqueness; creating positive relationships; and enabling environments), 'Formal' (Meadowside Curriculum including National Curriculum) and we are currently developing a Survival Curriculum, (the Hidden Curriculum, promoting the personal and social development of pupils and their accumulation of cultural capital, through life skills, SMSC development, enrichment activities, social communication, problem solving and discrete subjects).

These fluid, helical, spirals, offer a continuum defining distinctions between groups of learners and the degree of curriculum formalisation they will experience in either building the prerequisites for, or working within, a more 'conventional' Meadowside Curriculum including the National Curriculum.

The progressive and sequenced curricular are not defined by age, but by need, engagement style and achievement; **intent** on allowing pupils to achieve flexibly at any point during their school career. Each curricular design covers skills, "sticky" knowledge and understanding across a range of areas of learning, and they are run together, to facilitate a 'learning flow' between the 4. Differentiated "Quality First Teaching" is our **intent** for all our achievers, with individual learning needs being further met through personalisation and any gaps being identified, addressed through bespoke evidence-based interventions.

Curriculum planning informs the timetable design, with consultation with Subject Leaders(SLs) on how their subject or curriculum area is to be organised and all Lesson Leaders are made aware of the SL's clear **intent** in line with the school vision, their clear rationale and conceptual rigour of their curricular design, which they must follow with due diligence.

It is essential our pupils are told the purpose of their learning activity so they understand and can recall the connections to previous "sticky" learning and understand how this will be useful, to deal with problem solving and choices in adult life. Our **intent** with our helix shaped, fluid curricular is to offer relevant learning opportunities to embed deep learning. As curriculum designers and deliverers we must explain "Why we are learning about XXXX, as it will help us to". All pupils should be able to explain what they are learning and why, just as we, as teachers should reflect why we are teaching this, how does it build on prior learning, connect to other areas of the curriculum, relate to the pupil's experience, aspirations and the choices of adulthood? We as learning enablers must encourage pupils to connect to their previous experiences and deep learning to develop this further. For some learners the adults who know them best must observe behaviours as a communication of conceptual development and understanding, eg: cooperation when being re-positioned, body language, gesture and facial expression, Blanks' language levels used to communicate, connection with previous experience, deeper learning is then acknowledged as understood, to be built on.

No matter where a pupil is on our curriculum continuum, they should have access to a sequential curriculum content complimented with the effective use of high quality resources, opportunity for repetition, recall, quality first teaching approaches, motivational strategies, use of constructive feedback, clear next steps and assessment schema securely based developmentally in progression,

lateral or linear. Evidence of this confirms high expectations that teaching and learning will be deep and meaningful.

All learners want to make sense of the world and understand how they can grow and take some control and responsibility in their lives. As humans, we want to know what may pose a risk to us, what helps us to flourish, what the key concepts are in life and the connectivity of working through how successful our ideas may be.

We as educators must identify our **intent** for teaching and explain the impact it will have on pupil's learning, accumulation of cultural capital and survival in an ever changing world.

Curriculum Implementation

We had accomplished our coherent curriculum continuum, driven by our vision to prepare our young people for adulthood, with key links, interleaving, and opportunities to over-learn, running through. Now we had to implement effective teaching and learning which is person-centred for maximum success and which is fully understood by teachers. We are delivering CPDL programmes and engaging teachers in the journey so they have ownership and the teaching tools to best deliver "sticky" knowledge, in a holistic and personalised approach. Teachers must be clear on why they are teaching particular knowledge and skills, how it links with what has been learned before and how it may be useful to recall in the future, making these links really clear to the learner, so they can make the connections. Teachers must encourage learners to understand what they are learning and why, not just describe what they are doing.

"We are learning XXXX today, as it will help us to", reinforcing the connections.

Each young person has an entitlement to retain learning and to be able to generalise this. The wider curriculum, taught and hidden, focuses on cognition, communication and essential personal and social development. Learners have a right to an education which is well-taught, well resourced and realistically funded.

As a school we have prioritised: **"To do less, better and to work in smarter ways"**. We started to review our curriculum frameworks, in view of relevance and aspiration for adulthood in 2018. We then began to design assessment schema to evidence progress over time, from an individual's unique starting point. The pandemic Lockdowns led us to survey parents as to the best way we could support their child's learning. We developed Remote and then Blended learning opportunities, which were differentiated, with staff available remotely to support parents with personalisation. Implications of the pandemic reduced access to face to face therapies, to specialist pedagogy and resources, which we planned to redress using Catch Up monies. Individual cognitive challenge is key to effective learning. Remote Learning demonstrated that without the face to face, live conversations, with trained staff who know each Learner really well, differentiation on its own is insufficient, without deeper personalisation of learning materials and ongoing AfL, to challenge individuals to learn.

We also researched, through consultation, whether our curriculum in **preparation for adult life** is **ethically underpinned** by our **relevant curriculum** offer and we believe and promote that it is. We

mapped that through practical learning in the community + essential planning, reflection & further learning in the classroom our 14-19 Progression Pathways support this.

Progression Pathways	Core	Vocational	Life	Social
Preparation for Adulthood	College & Further Learning	Employment/ Volunteering	Good Health & Independent/Supported Living Options	Friends, Relationships & Community Inclusion

We are reassured that by ensuring young people with SEND receive the right support, advice and opportunity to find employment, live independently/supported and enjoy good health, their outcomes will be improved. Our "Preparing for Adulthood Programme" (PfA) is built on four key messages:

- Shared vision
- Raising aspirations
- Improved 14-19 options and support
- Personalised approach

Quality First Teaching (QFT) principles have been reinforced as an entitlement, which means high **quality** inclusive **teaching** together with continuous whole school processes for assessing, planning, implementing, tracking, monitoring and reviewing each child's progress. The **teacher** must have the highest possible expectations for each child and all pupils in their class.

The use of **effective questioning and allowing processing time** is key to facilitating each Learner the time to switch focus from, what they are doing to **what they are learning** in terms of key concepts and ideas, (Sticky deep learning). Using these techniques, teachers gain further insight into how well each Learner has understood the original material.

We have had whole school training on the effective use of TAs by teachers and on how to reduce the over-scaffolding and over-support. We expect ambitious goals to be set for individuals, with a relevant purpose that can be understood by the pupil to motivate them, connect them to the intended outcome, because they understand why they need to learn this.

Opportunities for over-learning must be interleaved. One off opportunities that do not offer repetition, revision or reinforcement are unlikely to be embedded in the long term memory.

Problem solving is also engineered to require the generalizing of knowledge and skills to new areas of learning.

To involve parents in their child's learning we set and agree Best Hoped For Outcomes, (BHFOs) and share knowledge organizers on the website to accompany the long term plan. This gives key words and information for Learners to rehearse and retain in their long term memory and be practiced to embed recall and fluency.

We always review our curriculum framework with a new intake. This means that through Transition, (scheduled to start 01.03 annually), we can consult with people who know the child well and how best they respond. Parents are asked if they have any preference re their child being class-based or on a carousel or a mixture. We group for success, allowing for peer groups, challenge and friendships.

September 21 we have planned for 97 Learners, 22 above our PAN. We have considered the staffing structure, hope to change to a new structure, and are recruiting to meet needs. Currently we are putting our learning from the Pandemic into action and decided on 3 class-based, cross phase groups and the other 8, class & KS based in the morning, with structured lunchtimes and a carousel in the afternoon. As appropriate we offer places in the 14-19 Options to those eligible from any class bases, to include.

Of those class based: Flair will deliver the **informal** curriculum through sensory approaches, all about me, Fusion will deliver a **semi-formal** curriculum based on their interests and personal and social development starting with "How do I fit in", Focus will deliver a **mixture of semi and formal**, carousel groups will be further involved in their learning on 14-19 Progression Pathways. The carousel classes at KS3 will be delivering formal curriculum and known as: Aspire, Enquire and Discover.

The curriculum Framework broadens as the young people are encouraged to take on more responsibility for their learning, towards their aspirations for the future.

A growing sense of choice, control and forward planning are promoted. Vocabulary is taught in context, using speech, signing, symbol recognition, reading and writing. We are increasingly using voice activated technologies to record and evidence progress in writing, reading, communication and comprehension. We also assess, using Blanks' level questioning, moving from concrete to abstract.

Curriculum Impact

We define impact as the means of "Evaluating what knowledge and understanding our pupils have gained against our expectations".

Subject Leaders have re-written our **curriculum frameworks** so they are **sequenced** and **interleaved** to facilitate repetition, reinforcement and progress. We are looking at the **impact/influence** of our sequenced curriculum and teaching, as to what **effect** that influence of **progressive planning and teaching** has on a pupil's long term memory in terms of retention and recall, ie: what effect/consequence or **outcome** has it led to - what more do they know, understand and are able to do and to what depth, or apply it, in different contexts. This applies to academic achievement, personal development, behaviour and social attitudes and cognition of early developmental goals.

Each curriculum area has been broken down into a set of learning **experiences and best hoped for outcomes**, so it is **relevant** to our pupils, supports their learning journey towards their aspirations and informs their decision making in **preparation for the choices of adult life**. Pupils and families are encouraged in Y9 to discuss post school aspirations and are offered 3-4 progression pathways, (Core, Vocational, Life Skills/Social Skills) and a range of **enrichment and leisure options** from Y9-14 to focus on the next phase of their life, **post school** and to **accumulate cultural capital**. Families and pupils express aspirations and wider outcomes within the EHCP, and progress to these are also monitored through our sharing of Personal Learning Intentions Mapping,(PLIMS), to individualise their learning.

Our pupils learn best through experience and high quality resources. The intended learning outcomes represent what the learning will enable the pupil to achieve, leading to "I can...." and "I am able to...." statements. Teachers must reflect on "**why I am teaching this?**", and make clear to pupils: **so we can problem solve, see how this connects with other aspects of our learning and use it in other contexts.** Teaching must reinforce to pupils, the deeper understanding of not just completing a task - but to **what they are learning and why.**

We use educational **assessment** as the systematic process of documenting, analysing and evaluating verifiable, **evidence based** data on the knowledge, skill, attitudes, and beliefs, of our pupils; to **fine tune**, our planned, progressive, learning programmes and **next steps** to improve pupil learning. **Assessment** plays an **important** role in the process of learning and motivation, for tracking progress, planning, reporting and involving parents, children and young people in learning.

Robust and connected assessment schema have also been designed to capture what "sticky knowledge has stuck" in the long term memory and can be recalled and demonstrated in different contexts. This will improve the process of us gaining a more accurate and in depth/breadth understanding of what each pupil has learnt, what needs to be revisited, reinforced and consolidated or where there are gaps. **Better links between our curricular and assessment schema** support learning and progress. We have also mapped relevant qualifications and accreditation across our curriculum, with clear success criteria, explained to and understood by pupils to externally validate achievements. We have also had the judgements of the Appraiser team validated externally in their accurate judging of teaching and learning against the EIF. We also partner with a local High School to access further qualifications, externally verified.

Crucial to progress is **how good/constructive the adult or peer feedback is**, which pupils can act on, how will they change the way they work/behave and how will we know. This is why **Blanks' language levels** are critical for adults to accurately **pitch questions**, give appropriate **processing time** and check pupils have **understood**. Where there are gaps or where consolidation of learning is needed, feedback has to be **informative and specific**. Adults must reassure pupils that it is ok to make mistakes in learning, so when they are corrected, this will reinforce/progress learning. We continue to focus on improving communication, striving to become an emotionally literate community and a Total Communication Environment to enable pupils to communicate their understanding of concepts to alleviate the frustrations of not having adults observe they have understood something, expressed through behaviour. Behaviour is a form of communication and staff need to know the pupils well to notice small steps of progress.

Key to this is adults **needing to assess what is being, or has been learnt** and **NOT** whether the pupil has completed the task. This must be reinforced to pupils so **they can express** what it is that is being learned.

We understand our curriculum is effective as we address the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, social, cultural and intellectual health and development of the child, in a joined-up way. We encourage our young people to learn to question, manage risk, problem solve and be encouraged to **make** a meaningful contribution throughout their lives for the **benefit** of all.

Ultimately we must evaluate the effectiveness of "curriculum impact" as about evaluating the extent to which we achieve our intent and implementation. We must triangulate this with the **evidence of the**

learning journey of the child in terms of have they been given the **knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life?**

At each stage of a pupils' education, we want to see evidence that pupils are being prepared for the next stage of education, training or employment, healthy lifestyles, inclusion and independence, and will consider whether pupils are ready for that next stage.

Our ultimate learner-centred curriculum goal is to enable and empower learners who must and can, think for themselves, be resilient and face challenges with strategies to safely overcome and make progress, in Preparation for Adult Life.

We aspire for our curriculum design, implementation and impact to be ethically underpinned by our vision, mission, aims, core values, curriculum, pedagogy, approaches/strategies, resources and assessment of progress:



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Sequenced Learning Progression through an individual pupil's learning journey in our curriculum. 01. 01. 22

Learning progressions are key to understanding pupils' progress in their learning. A pupil's Learning Journey starts from pre-birth with parents/carers. Once in school, curriculum frameworks enable teachers to identify where individuals are at in their learning and translate their assessment results into meaningful descriptions of their progress in learning. This understanding is essential for informing next steps in teaching and learning, to ensure that every pupil is making progress, whatever their achievements to date.

Learning progressions, (Schemes of Work), are sequenced, relevant, frameworks for improving teaching and learning, when used together with assessment for learning of pupil progress. If implemented effectively, they enable teachers to respond to the diverse range of achievements of pupils in their classes and provide evidence to ensure that all pupils are progressing in their learning, irrespective of their starting points.

In our effective progress collation system, "Evidence for Learning" (EFL), we record using multiple forms of assessment schema. Each of these assessments should be informed by a clear understanding of how pupil's learning develops in the relevant domain, including those who follow non-neurotypical learning progression routes. We provide clear conceptual schema with which to interpret results from various methods of assessment. They extend our understanding of pupil progress for all achievers.

Our staff, who know our pupils really well have designed their own curriculum frameworks, dependent on the degree of formalisation of curriculum, that pupils can access and created related assessment schema. This enables teachers to adapt and adjust learning opportunities that provide a differentiated,

flexible, and personalised approach for individuals and groups. This also enables teachers to baseline assess each pupil's starting point and to identify goals/targets that recognise those starting points as a foundation for future learning, so they can plan achievable but challenging next steps on a progression of increasingly demonstrated expertise. Well-written goals/targets should explicitly describe skills, knowledge and understanding the teacher expects the pupil to be able to achieve "with stretch and effort" within the time frame set.

To clarify: a pupil accessing our informal curriculum may be being supported to model the use of pointing to communicate their desire for a particular object from a choice. This is acknowledged as foundational to the skill of being able to make and communicate a choice, an enabling, influential skill for the pupil.

The next step for their communication learning goals are then grounded on skills they could demonstrate. The next step on the communication learning progression framework describes goals of being able to use names, words, signs, symbols, gestures, physical contact, and facial expressions to gain or direct attention, make requests, or convey feelings. It directs the teacher to consider important skills such as shared attention and pointing, and encourages the teacher to guide the pupil's learning towards being able to communicate a simple desire, interest, or an in-control message with the aid of pictures or objects.

This when assessed evidences that the pupil knows more and can do more - has made progress, from their starting point.

Piaget's "theory of conceptual development" refers to a sensorimotor stage of early development. In this stage he suggests that children understand their world through their motor & sensory abilities such as touch, vision, taste, and movement, so when things can no longer be seen or otherwise sensed they are thought to not exist.

In order to understand that objects continue to exist even when they are unseen, or otherwise sensed, these pupils must first develop a mental representation of the object. Over time, by exploring the world, the pupil has more and more experiences and these mental images become more complex. For some of our pupils, to do this we have to bring the world to them and enable them to explore it and learn experientially.

During early child development pupils have no concept that the world exists separate from their point of view and experience. Piaget's theory could result in separation anxiety for the pupil - as soon as they understand that objects and people can reappear they may become anxious. Hopefully, this is short lived and temporary. We guide their learning to accomplish this, reinforcing learning until they retain and embed this understanding in their long term memory. Given processing time, they recall this knowledge and connect it with further learning. They can transfer their knowledge that people and things can reappear in different situations. We use quest and the CSD tool (MAPP) to assess the progress of pre-formal learners, as building blocks towards the formal Meadows curriculum including the national curriculum and our related assessment schema.