

Part of the Branches Education Group



CURRICULUM POLICY



Approved By	Rebecca Warhurst	Head Teacher	Aug 2026
Amendments Made			
Linked Policies	See section 7.0		
Signed	<i>R Warhurst</i>	Head Teacher	Aug 2026
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1.0 Ethos

We believe that everyone has a personal best and that we play a vital role in making this a reality. All pupils will be given opportunities and support to reach their potential, achieve well and succeed in life beyond school.

2.0 Background

The Willows School is an independent special school and part of Branches Education Group. We provide education for up to 60 pupils aged 5 to 16 years with a range of complex needs, including social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, communication and interaction difficulties, autism, and the impact of trauma.

Many of our pupils have had limited positive experiences of education and may be working below age-related expectations. All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced significant disruption to their education and/or home lives. As a result, our curriculum is carefully designed to provide the stability, support and personalised learning opportunities needed to enable every pupil to succeed.

Teaching is delivered in small classes, averaging around five pupils, enabling a highly personalised approach to learning and strong relationships between pupils and staff. Many pupils also receive targeted one-to-one support to help them develop independence, build confidence and engage successfully in both individual and collaborative learning. All pupils access a full-time education programme tailored to their individual needs.

The Willows School is a positive, nurturing and well-resourced environment in which pupils and staff can thrive. Our learning environments are carefully designed to be safe, welcoming and adaptable, enabling staff to meet a wide range of learning, sensory and pastoral needs. Small class sizes, flexible teaching spaces and appropriate resources support the delivery of a broad, balanced and personalised curriculum, ensuring that every pupil can access learning in a way that meets their individual needs.

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the school. Staff actively challenge prejudice, stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, while fostering respect, understanding and appreciation of difference. Through our curriculum and school culture, pupils develop an understanding of the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

3.0 Aims and Intent

3.1 Aims

Our curriculum is pupil-centred, ambitious, relevant and engaging. We have high aspirations and expectations for every pupil and are committed to ensuring they achieve their full potential. Pupils leave The Willows School with a broad range of experiences, knowledge, skills and qualifications that provide them with a strong foundation for further education, employment and adult life.

We aim to:

- deliver a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum, rooted in the National Curriculum and adapted to meet each pupil's individual needs, abilities and interests.
- provide a clear framework for teaching and learning that allows flexibility, creativity and personalisation.
- ensure all pupils experience consistently high-quality teaching and learning.
- remove barriers to learning by providing the support pupils need to access, enjoy and succeed in education.
- equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and experiences needed to progress confidently into further education, employment and active participation in their communities.
- support staff to deliver our curriculum through high-quality continuing professional development, guidance and collaborative practice.

3.2 Intent - our curriculum thinking and high-level planning

Although independent schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum, The Willows School has chosen to use it as the foundation for our curriculum. We adapt and personalise this to ensure learning is accessible, meaningful and appropriately challenging for every pupil. Our curriculum is bespoke, recognising that pupils arrive with a wide range of strengths, barriers to learning, prior educational experiences and aspirations. We aim to provide all pupils with opportunities to access a broad range of subjects, experiences and enrichment that prepare them for the next stage of their lives.

Pupils are educated across Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, following a stage-not-age approach to learning. Whilst pupils remain within age-appropriate peer groups wherever possible, class placement is determined by a range of factors including chronological age, academic attainment, learning profile, communication needs, social and emotional development, interests and aspirations. This enables pupils to learn alongside peers with similar needs whilst accessing a curriculum pitched at an appropriate level to maximise progress.

Our curriculum is far more than a collection of subjects. It is the vehicle through which pupils develop academically, socially, emotionally and personally. Every interaction, experience and opportunity throughout the school day is viewed as part of the curriculum. We place equal importance on developing independence, resilience, communication, emotional regulation and life skills alongside academic achievement, ensuring pupils are equipped to thrive beyond school.

As a specialist setting, our curriculum is continually reviewed and refined to ensure it reflects the needs of our current cohort. We regularly evaluate our provision, adapting curriculum content, teaching approaches and learning opportunities to meet pupils' evolving needs, interests and aspirations. This flexible, responsive approach ensures that our curriculum remains relevant, ambitious and personalised, enabling every pupil to achieve success from their individual starting point.

3.3 Our School Motto

Our aim is for pupils to develop a joy of learning, and our school motto reflects this, having been inspired by other inspirational professionals who share mutual aims in respect of education.

“Building Resilience, Inspiring Growth” promotes the confidence to overcome challenges and encourages every pupil to keep learning, improving, and achieving their potential.

At all Key Stages, our curriculum is structured to help pupils to secure success:

- academically,
- personally and developmentally, and
- in life beyond school.

3.4 What do we want pupils to learn?

Our curriculum supports pupils to:

- gain the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to achieve the long-term outcomes identified within their EHCP, alongside any personalised targets agreed through ongoing assessment and review.
- develop the knowledge, skills and experiences that will have the greatest impact on their future life chances, building on their individual strengths, interests, needs and diagnoses.
- retain, recall and apply prior learning, enabling them to make sustained progress across subjects and throughout each key stage.
- understand their personalised learning targets and recognise the steps needed to achieve them.
- develop high aspirations for their future by exploring a range of careers, developing employability skills and preparing for further education, employment and adulthood.
- achieve a range of appropriate qualifications and accreditations that recognise their individual achievements and support their next steps.
- develop resilience, perseverance, creativity, independence, leadership and enterprise through a wide range of learning opportunities.
- develop a positive sense of self, confidence and emotional resilience by understanding their own health and wellbeing and learning strategies to regulate their emotions and behaviours effectively.
- develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, alongside an appreciation of British Values, preparing them to participate confidently in their local community and modern Britain.
- understand, respect and celebrate diversity, including the protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, promoting empathy, inclusion and respect for others.
- understand their rights and responsibilities, communicate their views confidently and appropriately, and become active participants in decisions that affect their lives.

3.5 What is Academic Success?

At The Willows School, academic success is measured by the progress each pupil makes from their individual starting point. Staff support pupils to develop:

- an understanding of their individual strengths, needs, diagnoses and the strategies that enable them to succeed.

- the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to make sustained progress and achieve their full potential.
- academic success that reflects their individual aspirations, interests and abilities.
- a range of appropriate qualifications and accreditations that prepare them for further education, employment, independence and adult life.

3.6 What do we mean by Pupils' Personal Development?

Pupils will be supported through opportunities to develop:

- positive attitudes, behaviour and readiness for learning.
- effective learning, organisation and study skills.
- social communication, emotional literacy and self-regulation.
- cognitive skills, including attention, working memory and problem-solving.
- self-awareness, confidence and resilience.
- an understanding of how to keep themselves safe, healthy, active and emotionally well.

3.7 Our Curriculum at Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 (Years 1 – 9)

As appropriate to each pupil's needs, learning is provided across the following subjects:

- English (including phonics in Key Stages 1 and 2 where appropriate)
- Mathematics
- Science (including Biology, Chemistry and Physics)
- Computing
- Humanities (History and Geography)
- Design and Technology
- Creative Arts (Art and Music)
- Physical Education and Outdoor Education
- Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education (PSHCEE)
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)
- Religious Education (RE)

Alongside the taught curriculum, pupils benefit from a range of bespoke learning opportunities that reflect the needs of our cohort. These include a whole-school Theme of the Week, which provides a shared thread for learning and promotes wider personal development, alongside dedicated opportunities for outdoor learning, life skills, social and emotional education, and All About Me—a daily personalised intervention designed to support each pupil's individual targets, wellbeing and personal development.

We believe that success should be experienced regularly and celebrated often. By providing meaningful opportunities for achievement across academic, personal and practical learning, pupils

develop confidence, resilience and a positive attitude towards education. This prepares them well for the increased expectations of Key Stage 4 and equips them with the knowledge, skills and independence needed for life beyond The Willows School.

3.8 Our Curriculum at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

At Key Stage 4, pupils follow a highly personalised curriculum designed around their individual strengths, aspirations, learning needs and future destinations. Our aim is for every pupil to work towards qualifications that are both appropriate and aspirational, enabling them to achieve success from their individual starting point and prepare for adulthood.

Depending on their ability and pathway, pupils may work towards a range of nationally recognised qualifications, including GCSEs, BTECs, Functional Skills and Entry Level qualifications, alongside vocational and life skills accreditations. Our qualifications offer is flexible, ensuring that all pupils have access to meaningful accreditation that reflects their achievements and supports progression into further education, employment or training. Further information can be found within our Accreditation and Qualifications Framework.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum includes the following core and foundation subjects:

Core subjects

- English
- Mathematics
- Science (including one or more of Biology, Chemistry and Physics)

Foundation subjects

- Computing
- Physical Education / Sport
- Citizenship (through PSHCEE)

Pupils also choose at least one additional option from a range of subjects, which may include:

- Art
- Music
- Design and Technology
- Humanities (Geography, History or Religious Education)

Alongside their academic studies, pupils continue to develop employability, independence and life skills through a range of practical learning opportunities, preparing them for successful transition into their chosen post-16 destination.

3.9 Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) and Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education (PSHCEE)

At The Willows School, all pupils access a comprehensive programme of Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) alongside Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education

(PSHCEE). We recognise that these subjects are fundamental to pupils' personal development, wellbeing, independence and preparation for adult life.

Our RSHE curriculum meets all statutory requirements and is delivered in accordance with current government guidance. Parents and carers have the right to withdraw their child from the non-statutory elements of Sex Education up until three terms before their 16th birthday. After this point, if a pupil wishes to receive Sex Education, the school will make appropriate arrangements to provide it (please refer to our RSHE Policy).

As a specialist setting, we recognise that pupils develop at different rates and require varying levels of support. Our RSHE and PSHCEE curriculum is therefore carefully sequenced, personalised and delivered using a stage-not-age approach, ensuring learning is age-appropriate whilst meeting pupils' individual developmental, communication and learning needs.

Learning is delivered through a combination of discrete lessons, whole-school Theme of the Week activities, assemblies, enrichment opportunities and everyday school experiences. This enables pupils to revisit and apply key concepts in meaningful contexts throughout their time at The Willows.

Through RSHE and PSHCEE, pupils develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to:

- build safe, healthy and respectful relationships
- understand physical and emotional health, wellbeing and self-care
- recognise and manage risk, including online safety and safeguarding
- develop confidence, resilience, emotional literacy and self-regulation
- understand diversity, equality and the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010
- become responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities
- develop financial capability, independence and the skills needed for adult life.

Careers education forms an integral part of our wider personal development curriculum. Pupils receive impartial careers information, advice and guidance, with learning tailored to their aspirations and next steps. The school is committed to embedding the Gatsby Benchmarks as our careers programme continues to develop (see the Careers and Work-Related Learning Policy).

The promotion of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development, British Values and respect for diversity is threaded throughout school life. Through lessons, assemblies, tutor time, enrichment activities and everyday interactions, pupils are encouraged to develop empathy, respect, responsibility and the confidence to participate positively in modern British society.

3.10 Religious Studies

At The Willows School, we recognise the important role that Religious Education (RE) plays in developing pupils' understanding of different beliefs, cultures and worldviews. RE contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, promoting respect, empathy and an appreciation of diversity within modern Britain.

As an independent special school, we are not required to follow the National Curriculum for Religious Education. However, our RE curriculum is informed by the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (SACRE) and is adapted to meet the individual needs, abilities and developmental stages of our pupils.

Learning explores the principal religions represented in Great Britain, reflecting the country's predominantly Christian traditions whilst also developing an understanding of other major world religions and non-religious worldviews. Pupils are encouraged to explore similarities and differences, challenge stereotypes and prejudice, and develop respect for the beliefs and values of others.

Religious Education is delivered through a range of engaging learning experiences, including dedicated lessons, cross-curricular learning, themed activities, whole-school events and the exploration of significant religious festivals and celebrations throughout the year. Teaching is personalised to ensure learning is accessible, meaningful and appropriate for all pupils.

Parents and carers have the right to withdraw their child from Religious Education and/or collective worship. From the age of 16, pupils may choose to withdraw themselves from collective worship. Further information is available from the Headteacher upon request.

3.11 The Wider Curriculum

At The Willows School, we believe that learning extends far beyond the classroom. Our wider curriculum is designed to enrich pupils' experiences, develop their individual strengths and interests, and prepare them for successful, independent adult lives.

As our school continues to grow, we will regularly review and develop our wider curriculum to ensure it reflects the needs, interests and aspirations of our pupils. We encourage both staff and pupils to contribute ideas for enrichment opportunities, enabling us to offer a broad range of activities that complement classroom learning. These may include clubs and projects such as horticulture, photography, drama, music, sport and other interest-based activities.

Alongside our academic curriculum, pupils access a range of bespoke experiences including Theme of the Week, outdoor learning, life skills, social and emotional learning, educational visits and enrichment activities, all of which support personal development and preparation for adulthood.

The wider curriculum is organised around the following key themes:

1. **Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)** – including statutory Relationships and Sex Education, health and wellbeing.
2. **Living in the Wider World** – including SMSC, British Values, financial education, citizenship and careers education.
3. **Independence and Life Skills** – preparing pupils for life at home, within the community and in the workplace.
4. **Careers and Work-Related Learning** – including impartial careers guidance, employability skills, enterprise and preparation for further education, employment and training.

School Council

At The Willows School, we are committed to ensuring that pupil voice is central to the ongoing development of both our curriculum and the wider life of the school. We actively seek pupils' views, ideas and feedback, using these to shape decision-making and improve the experiences we provide.

As the school continues to grow, we will establish a School Council, giving pupils the opportunity to represent their peers, contribute to school improvement and develop valuable leadership, communication and citizenship skills. We believe our pupils can be excellent ambassadors for The Willows and will encourage them to take an active role in school and community initiatives.

We will also work towards achieving recognised awards and accreditations, such as Healthy Schools Status and the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award, providing meaningful opportunities for pupils to influence positive change within both the school and the wider community.

3.12 Reading Across the Curriculum

At The Willows School, we place reading at the heart of our curriculum and recognise it as one of the most important skills pupils can develop. Reading underpins learning across all subjects and plays a vital role in developing communication, independence, confidence and lifelong opportunities. We are committed to fostering both the ability to read and a genuine enjoyment of reading.

We promote a culture of reading throughout the school. Classrooms and shared spaces celebrate books and authors, and pupils are provided with regular opportunities to read every day, including during tutor time, lessons and independent reading opportunities. Pupils are encouraged to access a wide range of high-quality texts that reflect their interests, needs and stage of development. Parents and carers are encouraged to support reading at home and work in partnership with school to promote positive reading habits.

On admission, pupils' reading ability is assessed to identify strengths, barriers and next steps. Staff provide targeted, evidence-informed support to enable pupils to make strong progress from their individual starting points. For pupils who require additional support, interventions may begin with developing early communication, listening and phonological awareness before progressing to systematic phonics teaching where appropriate. Our aim is for every pupil to become a confident, fluent and motivated reader.

As pupils progress through the school, they explore an increasingly ambitious range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry across the curriculum. Reading opportunities are embedded in all subject areas, enabling pupils to develop vocabulary, comprehension and subject-specific knowledge. We also encourage pupils to take an active role in promoting reading through initiatives such as **Reading Champions**, book recommendations, peer mentoring and book reviews, helping to create a school community where reading is valued and celebrated.

4.0 Curriculum Delivery– Implementation

The curriculum will be delivered in a way that best meets pupils' needs.

4.1 Curriculum Time

The Willows School is open for a minimum of 195 days each academic year, including five INSET days for staff training. Pupils attend school for a minimum of 190 days per year. Further information can be found in the school's Term Dates and Holidays, available from the school office and on our website.

We believe that every minute of the school day should have purpose. Pupils have access a full-time programme of education. Beyond academic learning, we recognise that every part of the school day provides valuable opportunities to develop communication, independence, emotional regulation and social skills.

Pupils taught lessons every day, with some subjects delivered as extended sessions where this enhances learning, such as Physical Education, Outdoor Learning or Technology. Alongside these lessons, pupils participate in a range of daily learning opportunities that reflect the needs of our specialist cohort. These include directed reading, targeted intervention sessions, Theme of the Week,

social and emotional learning, and All About Me, our personalised intervention programme that supports individual targets and personal development.

Break and lunchtime are viewed as structured learning opportunities rather than unstructured free time. Staff actively support pupils to develop communication, friendships, emotional regulation, resilience, tolerance and appropriate social interaction through carefully planned activities and positive role modelling.

Our timetable is designed around the needs of our pupils and is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains responsive to the current cohort. Careful consideration is given to reducing unnecessary transitions, providing opportunities for regulation, therapeutic and clinical interventions, enrichment activities, community engagement and the development of practical life skills. This flexible, bespoke approach ensures pupils are fully supported to engage, achieve and prepare successfully for adulthood.

4.2 Class Sizes and Staff Support

Teaching takes place in small classes, averaging around five pupils, enabling highly personalised learning and strong relationships between pupils and staff. Every class is staffed by a minimum of one qualified teacher and one teaching assistant, ensuring pupils receive consistent, high-quality support throughout the school day.

Staffing is deployed flexibly to meet the individual needs of pupils. Whilst many pupils will learn successfully within their class group, some may require additional adult support, targeted interventions or bespoke timetables that reflect their strengths, needs and aspirations. Individual interventions are planned where appropriate to address gaps in learning, develop key skills and maximise progress.

As pupils move through the school, we place increasing emphasis on developing independence and preparing them for adulthood. By Key Stage 4, our aim is for pupils to access learning with greater independence wherever possible, with support carefully tailored to promote confidence, resilience and successful outcomes beyond school.

Our staff team is highly skilled and experienced in supporting pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. Teachers and teaching assistants work collaboratively to deliver an ambitious, personalised curriculum that enables every pupil to achieve success from their individual starting point.

4.3 New Pupil Admissions

We recognise that every pupil joins us with a unique profile of strengths, needs and previous experiences. For many pupils, transitioning into a new educational setting can be challenging, particularly where there is a history of anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance or disrupted education. As a result, every pupil follows a personalised 12-week transition programme, designed to provide the right level of support while enabling us to build a detailed understanding of their individual needs.

Prior to admission, a Pupil Passport is collaboratively developed during the admissions meeting with parents/carers, school leaders and other relevant professionals. This document captures key information about the pupil's strengths, interests, communication, learning needs, effective strategies, potential triggers and any reasonable adjustments required to ensure a successful transition.

Throughout the 12-week transition period, staff complete assessments, observations and ongoing reviews to identify each pupil's academic, social, emotional and pastoral needs. This enables us to tailor provision, implement effective support strategies and identify any additional needs that may not have been previously recognised. Where appropriate, we will work closely with parents, carers and external professionals to ensure a joined-up approach to meeting the pupil's needs.

Most pupils begin on a phased transition timetable, allowing them to gradually build confidence, establish positive routines and experience success within the school environment. While our ambition is for every pupil to access full-time education, we recognise that this journey looks different for every child. Progression towards full-time attendance is therefore planned on an individual basis, with changes made at a pace that is appropriate for the pupil.

Parents and carers will receive a weekly transition update, outlining how their child has settled, celebrating successes, identifying any areas requiring additional support and confirming any agreed changes to their timetable or attendance hours for the following week.

At the end of the 12-week transition period, a Transition Review Meeting will be held with parents/carers and relevant professionals. This meeting provides an opportunity to review the pupil's progress, evaluate the effectiveness of the transition arrangements, agree any ongoing support or provision required, and confirm the pupil's longer-term timetable and educational programme.

4.4 How our Curriculum will be Delivered

Pupils will be challenged and supported to achieve the best possible outcomes and make sustained progress throughout each Key Stage. This will be achieved through high-quality teaching that develops pupils' knowledge, skills and vocabulary over time.

Our suitably qualified and experienced staff carefully select the most appropriate curriculum content for our pupils. Curriculum Maps and detailed Schemes of Work are used to ensure that each subject is coherently planned, appropriately sequenced and fully aligned to the expectations of each Key Stage.

Staff identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding through ongoing assessment and adapt teaching accordingly. This enables pupils to build secure foundations, prepare for the next stage of learning and, where appropriate, close gaps with their peers nationally.

Teaching staff use a wide range of high-quality resources and teaching approaches, both within and beyond the classroom, to bring learning to life. Learning experiences are carefully adapted to meet each pupil's age, stage of development, interests and individual needs.

Our curriculum is delivered:

- through logically sequenced lessons that build upon prior learning and make meaningful connections across subjects.
- by knowledgeable staff who help pupils remember more over time through regular retrieval, practice and application.
- in engaging and inspiring ways that develop curiosity, confidence and enjoyment of learning while enabling pupils to experience success.
- through carefully planned opportunities that prepare pupils for the next stage of education, employment and adult life.

A range of teaching and learning approaches are used, including:

- learning beyond the classroom through the school grounds and local community, including places of historical, geographical and cultural interest such as museums, galleries and landmarks.
- interactive activities and educational games.
- explicit teaching of vocabulary, including subject-specific and ambitious language, alongside regular opportunities for extended writing.
- questioning, discussion, debate, role play and drama.
- practical learning experiences, including model making, art, music, design and physical activities.
- enquiry-based and project-based learning, providing opportunities for both independent and collaborative work.
- cross-curricular themes and topic-based learning where these strengthen pupils' understanding and make learning more meaningful.

Our curriculum is carefully sequenced across each year group to ensure that knowledge and skills build progressively over time. Planned opportunities for retrieval and revision enable pupils to revisit prior learning, consolidate understanding and deepen their knowledge before moving on to increasingly complex concepts. This cumulative approach supports pupils to make strong progress across all subjects.

Teaching staff have secure subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of the diverse needs of our pupils. Staff continually develop their expertise through high-quality professional development, collaboration with colleagues and sharing effective practice across schools and educational settings.

Through skilled questioning, modelling and carefully scaffolded instruction, staff break learning into manageable steps that enable pupils to achieve success. Teachers understand the individual strategies that support each pupil most effectively and make appropriate adaptations to ensure that every pupil can successfully access the curriculum while maintaining high expectations.

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Regular formative and summative assessment enables staff to identify strengths, address misconceptions and plan targeted support where required. This ensures that pupils continue to make strong progress and retain key knowledge over time. For example, in mathematics pupils revisit concepts such as fractions throughout their learning journey, developing from recognising simple fractions to performing increasingly complex calculations and confidently explaining the methods they have used. This exemplifies our commitment to a carefully sequenced curriculum that builds learning through small, progressive steps.

Further information can be found in our *Assessment and Feedback Policy*.

4.5 Delivery at Key Stage 1, 2 and 3

In our experience, many pupils, particularly those with social communication differences or heightened levels of anxiety, respond more positively when the majority of their academic learning takes place within a consistent classroom environment. Reducing unnecessary movement around the school and limiting changes in teaching staff helps pupils to develop confidence, establish secure routines and engage more successfully with learning.

During the first 12 weeks following admission, pupils will complete a personalised transition programme, during which staff undertake a range of assessments and observations. This enables us to identify pupils' strengths, any gaps in knowledge and skills, and any additional interventions or therapeutic support required. Where appropriate, clinical or therapeutic provision will be incorporated into an individualised timetable to reduce barriers to learning and maximise engagement and progress.

Physical Education is delivered at the end of the school day within the local community, with our primary hub being **Blackburn Youth Zone**. This provides pupils with access to outstanding facilities that extend beyond those typically available within a school setting, including indoor and outdoor sports pitches, a fully equipped gym, climbing facilities, a boxing gym, dance studio and a range of indoor sports spaces. The Youth Zone also offers high-quality facilities for music, drama, information technology and design technology, enabling us to enrich the wider curriculum and provide additional learning opportunities where appropriate.

The Youth Zone has shower facilities available for pupils who wish to use them following physical activity. However, as Physical Education sessions take place at the end of the school day, the majority of pupils will choose to return home to shower after their session.

4.6 Delivery at Key Stage 4

In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares them for further education, employment and independent adult life. All pupils study a core curriculum consisting of English, Mathematics, Science, RSHE (including PSHCE), Work-Related Learning and, where appropriate, Work Experience.

Alongside the core curriculum, pupils access a personalised programme of study that reflects their strengths, interests, aspirations and future destinations. This may include a range of vocational and practical learning opportunities designed to develop employability skills, independence and confidence.

Our ambition is for every pupil to leave school with meaningful and nationally recognised qualifications. Depending on their individual starting points, abilities and aspirations, pupils will work towards an appropriate range of accredited qualifications, including GCSEs, Functional Skills, Entry Level qualifications and vocational awards.

Throughout Key Stage 4, pupils continue to access any clinical, therapeutic or pastoral support required. Individual timetables remain flexible to ensure that interventions, wellbeing support and preparation for adulthood are effectively integrated alongside academic learning, enabling every pupil to achieve the best possible outcomes.

4.7 RSHE, SMSC, PSHCEE and Citizenship

Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) development, RSHE, PSHCEE, Citizenship, British Values and the Protected Characteristics are woven throughout our curriculum as golden threads. Rather than being taught solely through discrete lessons, these important themes are embedded across everyday school life, including tutor sessions, assemblies, enrichment activities, themed learning, educational visits and wider curriculum experiences.

We actively promote the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to

develop the knowledge, confidence and skills required to become respectful, responsible and active members of their communities.

As part of our wider SMSC curriculum, pupils are provided with regular opportunities to experience awe and wonder, contribute positively to school life, support others, and develop a strong sense of social responsibility. They also learn about the Protected Characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010, developing an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion while fostering respect for others.

Pupils are encouraged to have a meaningful voice within the school community through opportunities such as the Student Council. As the school grows, representatives will be elected democratically from each class or Key Stage, enabling pupils to influence decision-making and contribute to the ongoing development of the school.

Reading Champions play an important role in promoting a positive reading culture by mentoring younger pupils, recommending books, writing reviews and celebrating reading across the school.

To ensure that pupils' personal development extends beyond the academic curriculum, we use Gridmaker to plan, record and monitor wider learning opportunities throughout the school. This enables staff to capture each pupil's experiences and achievements across areas such as personal development, enrichment, careers education, life skills, cultural experiences, community engagement, leadership opportunities and preparation for adulthood. Using Gridmaker ensures that every pupil benefits from a rich and balanced wider curriculum, with opportunities carefully tracked and planned throughout their time at school.

4.8 Careers and Work Related Learning

Preparing pupils for adulthood is a fundamental part of our curriculum. Through a structured careers programme, we aim to raise aspirations, broaden horizons and equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make informed decisions about their future education, employment and training.

All pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 have access to independent and impartial careers information, advice and guidance from qualified careers advisers. For pupils in Year 11 who reside within Blackburn with Darwen, this includes support from New Directions, who provide up-to-date guidance on post-16 pathways, including further education, apprenticeships, training opportunities and employment. This personalised advice helps pupils and families to explore suitable progression routes that reflect each young person's strengths, interests and aspirations.

Careers education is embedded throughout the curriculum and linked closely to the Gatsby Benchmarks, ensuring pupils develop a clear understanding of the world of work from an early stage. Pupils regularly explore different career pathways, employment sectors and the skills and qualifications required to succeed in a wide range of occupations.

In Key Stage 4, pupils complete dedicated Work-Related Learning lessons and work towards recognised qualifications, including NCFE Preparing for Work and Employability where appropriate. These programmes develop essential employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, organisation, resilience, professionalism and independent living, preparing pupils for successful transition into further education, employment or training.

Pupils also benefit from a wide range of meaningful employer encounters and workplace experiences. This includes visits to local colleges, universities, training providers and employers, as well as careers fairs, taster days and appropriately risk-assessed work experience placements. These

opportunities allow pupils to explore potential career pathways while developing confidence in real-world environments.

To further raise aspirations, we regularly invite employers, apprenticeship providers, colleges and professionals from a diverse range of industries into school to share their experiences through careers lessons, assemblies, workshops and enrichment activities. By exposing pupils to a broad range of careers and positive role models, we help them develop ambitious yet realistic aspirations for their future.

Further information can be found in our *Careers and Work-Related Learning Policy*.

4.9 Monitoring Appropriate Curriculum Delivery

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the curriculum is planned and delivered in accordance with statutory guidance and reflects the school's values of inclusivity, respect and balanced education. Through regular quality assurance activities, including lesson observations, learning walks, curriculum reviews and discussions with staff and pupils, the Headteacher will monitor the quality, consistency and appropriateness of curriculum delivery across the school.

Where political, social or controversial issues are explored as part of the curriculum, educational visits or enrichment activities, pupils will be presented with a balanced and objective overview of differing viewpoints. Teaching will encourage pupils to think critically, ask questions, evaluate evidence and develop their own informed opinions, without promoting partisan political views.

All staff are expected to understand and fulfil their legal duty to remain politically impartial in their professional role. Appropriate training, guidance and ongoing monitoring ensure that teaching remains balanced, evidence-informed and free from bias, while creating a safe environment in which pupils can respectfully discuss a wide range of perspectives.

Teaching is carefully planned to ensure that sensitive or potentially controversial topics are presented in an age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate manner. Staff take account of pupils' individual needs, existing knowledge and understanding to ensure that discussions are respectful, inclusive and accessible to all learners.

Where external organisations, employers, charities or visiting speakers contribute to the curriculum or wider school experiences, the school undertakes appropriate checks to ensure that their materials, resources and delivery are suitable for pupils and comply with statutory guidance on political impartiality. This ensures that all external contributions complement the curriculum while maintaining the school's commitment to balanced, objective and impartial education.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The Proprietor and Governance Chair are responsible for:

- approving, monitoring and reviewing this policy.
- working with the Headteacher to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and the progress and attainment of pupils.
- providing appropriate support and challenge regarding curriculum development and implementation.
- ensuring the curriculum remains broad, balanced, ambitious and accessible to all pupils.

- ensuring the school meets its statutory duties relating to curriculum provision.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- providing the strategic leadership and oversight of the curriculum.
- working collaboratively with senior leaders and teaching staff to develop, review and implement Curriculum Maps and Schemes of Work.
- ensuring the curriculum is broad, balanced, ambitious and meets the needs of all pupils.
- monitoring the quality of curriculum implementation through quality assurance activities, including learning walks, lesson visits, book looks and pupil voice.
- ensuring teaching and learning are consistently of a high standard across the school.
- supporting and developing staff to deliver the curriculum effectively while ensuring workload remains proportionate and manageable.
- making appropriate adaptations to the curriculum in response to pupil need, assessment information and statutory requirements.
- ensuring teaching materials and curriculum content comply with the Equality Act 2010 and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- keeping abreast of statutory guidance and curriculum developments and implementing changes where required.
- reporting to the Proprietor and Chair of Governance on curriculum effectiveness, pupil outcomes and statutory compliance.
- reviewing and updating this policy.

Senior Leaders are responsible for:

As a small specialist school, we do not operate with designated Subject Leader roles. Instead, responsibility for curriculum leadership sits with the Senior Leadership Team, who oversee curriculum development across the school while appropriately delegating aspects of planning, delivery and evaluation to teaching staff.

Senior Leaders are responsible for:

- providing strategic leadership and oversight of allocated curriculum areas.
- leading the development, implementation and review of Curriculum Maps and Schemes of Work.
- ensuring curriculum content is ambitious, coherently sequenced and meets statutory requirements.
- monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum implementation through quality assurance activities.
- analysing assessment information and pupil outcomes to inform curriculum development.
- ensuring appropriate resources are available to support high-quality curriculum delivery.
- supporting, coaching and challenging teaching staff to continually improve curriculum delivery.

- delegating curriculum responsibilities appropriately while ensuring teachers contribute to curriculum development, evaluation and continuous improvement.
- ensuring the curriculum remains inclusive, accessible and responsive to the needs of all pupils.

Teaching Staff are responsible for:

- implementing this policy consistently within their classroom practice.
- planning and delivering high-quality lessons that reflect the school's curriculum and agreed Schemes of Work.
- contributing to the ongoing development and review of curriculum planning, resources and learning sequences alongside senior leaders.
- adapting teaching appropriately to support individual pupils and remove barriers to learning.
- using a range of effective teaching strategies to engage pupils and promote strong progress.
- assessing pupils regularly and using assessment information to inform planning and identify next steps.
- sharing curriculum developments, effective practice and resource ideas with colleagues.
- promoting high expectations, celebrating achievement and fostering a positive attitude towards learning.
- monitoring pupils' progress and communicating concerns, achievements and support needs with senior leaders, parents/carers and other professionals where appropriate.
- ensuring the curriculum is inclusive, accessible and ambitious for every pupil.

6.0 Assessment and Monitoring - Impact on Pupil Outcomes

The progress pupils make, the knowledge and skills they acquire, and the extent to which they are prepared for future learning and adult life provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of our curriculum. Through robust assessment and quality assurance processes, we continually evaluate the impact of our curriculum and use this information to drive improvement.

6.1 Impact: How We Know Our Curriculum is Effective

The success of our curriculum is measured not only through academic achievement but also through the personal, social and emotional development of our pupils. We regularly review a range of evidence to ensure that our curriculum remains ambitious, relevant and responsive to pupils' individual needs and aspirations. Ultimately, we know our curriculum is effective when pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education, training, employment and adult life.

The impact of our curriculum is evidenced through pupils who:

- enjoy learning, engage positively in school life and make sustained progress over time;
- retain and apply prior learning, enabling them to build knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum;
- develop secure literacy, communication and numeracy skills that support everyday life and future learning;

- achieve meaningful and nationally recognised qualifications appropriate to their individual pathway;
- make strong progress towards their EHCP outcomes, Personal Education Plan targets (where applicable) and individual learning goals;
- develop aspirations and an understanding of the opportunities available through further education, apprenticeships, training and employment;
- acquire transferable skills including communication, teamwork, resilience, independence and problem-solving;
- become increasingly independent and require reduced levels of support over time;
- develop the confidence, emotional resilience and social skills needed for successful transitions into adulthood;
- feel safe, valued and respected, demonstrating positive self-esteem and emotional wellbeing;
- understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles, manage risk and keep themselves safe;
- demonstrate respect, kindness and tolerance, forming positive relationships and contributing to their communities;
- secure positive destinations that reflect their aspirations, strengths and individual needs.

Curriculum impact is evaluated through a wide range of evidence, including assessment information, pupil progress data, attendance, behaviour, engagement, quality assurance activities, pupil voice, parental feedback and destination information. Leaders triangulate this evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and identify areas for further development. This ensures that the curriculum continues to meet the needs of pupils and supports the best possible outcomes for all.

6.2 Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It enables staff to identify pupils' starting points, monitor progress, inform planning and evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement and development.

Pupils' academic progress is assessed continuously through high-quality formative assessment alongside planned summative assessment. Teachers use assessment information to identify strengths, address misconceptions, adapt teaching and ensure pupils continue to make strong progress from their individual starting points.

Pupils' progress is tracked termly through B Squared, enabling leaders and teachers to monitor the development of subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding over time. Progress towards individual targets, including EHCP outcomes, is reviewed regularly through ongoing assessment, termly reviews and the Annual Review process.

To monitor progress in the key foundations of learning, reading age, spelling age and mathematical age are assessed termly. This information is used to identify strengths, inform intervention strategies and evaluate the impact of support over time.

Social, emotional and behavioural development is assessed through Boxall Profiling, alongside professional observations and analysis of attendance, engagement, behaviour, reward systems and

wider pastoral information. This supports a holistic understanding of each pupil's development and wellbeing.

Personal development, including pupils' experiences of British Values, Protected Characteristics, SMSC development and wider enrichment opportunities, is tracked through Gridmaker. This ensures that pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that extends beyond academic achievement and supports their development as active and responsible citizens.

Assessment information is analysed at individual, cohort and whole-school level to identify trends, evaluate the effectiveness of provision and ensure that all groups of pupils are making appropriate progress. Where barriers to learning are identified, additional support may be implemented, including targeted classroom interventions, small-group or one-to-one support, pastoral provision, therapeutic services or clinical interventions.

6.3 Monitoring

Effective monitoring and quality assurance ensure that the curriculum remains ambitious, progressive and responsive to the needs of all pupils. These processes enable leaders to evaluate the quality of education, identify areas for development and secure continuous improvement.

Quality assurance activities include:

- curriculum planning reviews and work scrutiny;
- learning walks focused on identified school priorities;
- lesson observations and supportive peer observations;
- discussions with pupils to gather their views on learning and curriculum experiences;
- analysis of assessment, attendance, behaviour and progress information;
- review of intervention impact and outcomes for individual pupils and groups.

To promote consistently high-quality teaching and learning, staff benefit from:

- a robust appraisal process that provides support, accountability and professional challenge;
- collaborative planning, peer observations and opportunities to share effective practice;
- high-quality, personalised continuing professional development;
- instructional coaching and regular professional dialogue with leaders.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team maintain strategic oversight of the quality of education and regularly review assessment data, quality assurance findings, pupil outcomes, attendance information, behaviour data, pupil voice and parental feedback. This information is triangulated to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and its impact on pupils' learning and development.

Where monitoring identifies areas requiring improvement, targeted actions are implemented, monitored and reviewed to ensure sustained improvements in teaching, learning and pupil outcomes. Leaders also evaluate the experiences and outcomes of different groups of pupils to ensure equality of opportunity and that every pupil can succeed.

Through ongoing self-evaluation, leaders identify strengths, priorities and areas for development. These are reflected within the School Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Development Plan (SDP),

ensuring that improvement activity is purposeful, evidence-informed and focused on securing the best possible outcomes for pupils.

The quality of education is subject to both internal and external scrutiny, including oversight by the Proprietor, external school improvement partners and inspection. This scrutiny provides support, challenge and accountability, helping to ensure the curriculum remains effective, meets pupils' needs and prepares them successfully for their next stage of education and adult life.

7.0 RELATED POLICIES

- Assessment, Feedback, Marking, Recording and Reporting Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Careers and Work-Related Learning Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

8.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Accreditation and Qualifications

Accreditation and Qualifications

As the school develops, so will the range of qualifications and accreditation opportunities on offer to pupils. Pupils needing to sit examinations in the early months of the school opening, will be supported to do so at other local schools or colleges as appropriate. The school will apply to become an examinations centre in the near future.

Curriculum Area	Title	NQF Level (s)
English	Functional Skills qualification Entry level Certificate English Key Skills Communication GCSE English	Entry 1 - level 1 Entry, 1 and 2 1 and 2
Maths	Functional skills qualification Entry level Certificate Mathematics GCSE Mathematics	Entry 1 – level 1 Entry 1 - 3
Science	Entry Level Award in Science GCSE Science	Entry 1 - 3
ICT	Functional Skills qualification Entry Level Certificate in Information and Communication Technology	Entry 1 – level 2 Entry 1 – 3
Vocational and Work-Related skills	Preparation for Working Life Step Up Working with Others Improving Own Learning Problem Solving Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene Entry level vocational certificates	Entry 3 -level1 Entry 3 -level1 1 and 2 1 and 2 1 and 2 1 Entry
Personal and Social Skills	Entry level Certificate in Life Skills Entry level certificate in Citizenship Bronze award and bronze/ Silver challenge Award Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) St John's Ambulance Young Lifesaver Award	Entry Entry N/A 1 and 2 N/A
The wider curriculum	Unit Award Scheme Entry level certificates GCSEs in a variety of different subjects	Entry 1 and 2

Pupils will be supported to study and gain as many externally accredited qualifications as possible.