

## Hornbeam Academy Curriculum Overview

### Vision for the Curriculum

The Curriculum at Hornbeam Academy is child-centred. It is designed to meet the needs of all our learners. The Hornbeam Curriculum promotes building connections, problem solving skills, and coherence. It ensures on-going opportunities for active cross-curricular and contextualised learning. It addresses the needs of the broad age and ability range within the school, and meets each individual at their point of learning.

Penny Lacey (2011) suggested that a curriculum for young people with learning difficulties needs to be constructed around the “twin pillars” of “communication” and “cognition”. She argued that for these students there needs to be a “move away from a National Curriculum perspective to a developmental perspective, with “communication” and “cognition” being the principal things which are explicitly taught. She recommended that for many young people with learning difficulties, subjects such as history and music should serve to provide a context for learning “communication” and “cognition” rather than represent the focus of learning. As the extent to which different learners with learning disabilities engage with the National Curriculum needs to vary, according to their attainment levels and nature of their SEN Lacey suggested three types of curriculum for special needs schools, enabling learners to access the full national curriculum, in contexts where it is best placed to meet their needs.

At Hornbeam Academy we have adopted a curriculum structure which encompasses 3 broad levels: ‘informal’, ‘semi-formal’ and ‘formal’. These terms, originally coined by Whitefield SAC (2009), offer a means of making subtle distinctions between not only groups of learners but also the degree of curriculum formalisation they will experience in either building the prerequisites for, or working within, a more ‘conventional’ National Curriculum type approach.

All of our learners are on a pathway matched to their stage of learning: explorers (informal), Horizon (semi-formal) and Challenger (formal). The pathways are not defined by age, but by need and achievement; learners are therefore able to move flexibly between pathways at any point during their school career. Each pathway covers skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of areas of learning, and they are blended together, so as to facilitate a ‘learning flow’ between the three.

All curriculum planning focuses on the key skills of communication, cognition, physical development and self-care and independence, and is informed by a developmental perspective. Class timetables are constructed around the principle that every moment of the school day is a learning opportunity. Each aspect of school life is a planned learning experience, and linked to curriculum targets.

A broad and flexible rolling plan of curriculum ‘themes’ support cross curricular and contextualised learning. Teachers plan for educational visits, assemblies and events, which are relevant, meaningful, and connected with classroom learning. Long-Term and Medium-term planning ensures that all learners to encounter ICT in a variety of ways.

We have a clear and comprehensive overview of how and when aspects of the curriculum related to safe and healthy lifestyles are addressed. This ensures that they are planned for with consideration of other factors, to ensure maximum impact.

Learner voice informs curriculum development and the Rights of the Child are directly addressed through the curriculum, feature in long term planning, and support the development of positive and safe learning environments.

14-19 courses support the best possible outcomes for each individual student, and offer value-added.

### Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum

Learners follow the EYFS curriculum throughout Early Years and KS1.

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape the EYFS programme. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development.

Children are also supported in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Targets will be set in the above areas of learning.

These targets will cover the 4 areas of need outlined in SEND code of practice namely cognition and learning, communication and interaction social, emotional and mental health and sensory and/or physical

Throughout the EYFS curriculum, staff reflect on the characteristics of effective learning, which include:

- Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go';
- Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

### The Informal Curriculum (Explorer Pathway)

This curriculum is designed for learners with Profound and Multiple Difficulties (PMLD), working between P1 and P4, and at a developmental level of between 0 and 18 months.

This curriculum is designed to enable learners to develop a sense of security in the school environment, which is comprehensible and meaningful to them. The focus is upon enabling them to establish positive interactive relationships with others, to proactively explore the world around them, gaining environmental control skills. All learners will be given maximum opportunities to achieve the highest level of independence possible.

Targets will be set in the following areas of learning:

- My Communication
- My Thinking
- My Body
- My Care and Independence
- Me and My Community

These targets will cover the 4 areas of need outlined in SEND code of practice namely cognition and learning, communication and interaction social, emotional and mental health and sensory and/or physical.

In line with recommendations in the Rochford Review learners on this pathway will be assessed against the following 7 aspects of cognition and learning:

- responsiveness
- curiosity
- discovery
- anticipation
- persistence
- initiation
- investigation

### The Semi-Formal Curriculum (Horizon Pathway)

The curriculum is designed for learners with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), working broadly between P4 and end of KS1 expectations. Learners following our semi-formal curriculum learn best when learning is related to their own experiences. Some may learn through play; others will learn more effectively through functional activities, and yet others will respond well to a topic-based approach. The teaching approach reflects the age and learning style of the learners concerned. It is a Life-Skills Based Curriculum.

Targets will be set in the following areas of learning:

- My Communication
- My Thinking
- Myself/My Body
- How My World Works

- My Creativity
- Me and My Community

These targets will cover the 4 areas of need outlined in SEND code of practice namely cognition and learning, communication and interaction social, emotional and mental health and sensory and/or physical.

In line with recommendations in the Rochford Review learners on this pathway will be assessed against the following 7 aspects of cognition and learning:

- responsiveness
- curiosity
- discovery
- anticipation
- persistence
- initiation
- investigation

#### The Formal Curriculum (Challenger pathway)

This curriculum is for learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) working at P8/end of year 1 expectations or above in the National Curriculum.

Learners on our challenger pathway (those operating within the National Curriculum) access the range of National Curriculum subjects for their Key Stage, modified in the light of their developmental level and special educational needs. Life skills and independence skills will also form a large part of the curriculum. As the term 'formal' implies, there is a high level of structure. We nevertheless avoid making the formal curriculum too abstract; teachers ensure that learning is linked to practical activities and consolidated and applied in practical sessions. Older learners working at the formal level may pursue accreditation pathways (e.g. Entry Level and Level 1 courses and exams).

Targets will be set in the following areas of learning:

- English
- My Communication
- Maths
- My Thinking
- Myself/My Body
- How My World Works
- My Creativity
- Me and My Community
- Life Skills

These targets will cover the 4 areas of need outlined in SEND code of practice namely cognition and learning, communication and interaction social, emotional and mental health and sensory and/or physical.

In line with recommendations in the Rochford Review learners on this pathway will be assessed using the interim pre-key stage standards for learners working below the standard of the national curriculum tests.

#### Curriculum for Years 9 +

Students in Year 9 and beyond study for a range of different accreditations including functional skills and entry level pathways. We run a 3 year cycle from year 9 to allow our learners the greatest opportunity to receive maximum accreditations when they leave school at 16.

Areas of learning include

Functional Maths

Functional English

Functional ICT

Accessing the community and independent travel

Shopping and cooking

Home management

Independence and Life Skills

Vocational Skills

Enrichment

Active citizenship

Personal safety and hygiene

#### Teaching of R.E

R.E. remains a statutory subject in Key Stages 1-4. Religious education is taught to all classes, either through focussed R.E. lessons or integrated into other curricular areas and covers Christianity and other faiths. R.E. is included at an appropriate level and, in many classes will form an integrated part of Myself and My Body and Me and My Community within the semi-formal curriculum. The aim of religious education is not only to learn about different religions and faiths, but also to help the students understand cultural differences and similarities, and to promote greater respect and tolerance of others. All classes hold a daily act collective of worship and classes regularly join together for assemblies and celebrations. We strive for an atmosphere of trust and respect where students can examine, question and further develop their thinking

## Challenger Pathway Curriculum

Learners on the Challenger Pathway at Hornbeam Academy follow a formal curriculum designed to support learners with moderate learning difficulties, who are attaining within (or very close to) National Curriculum levels 1 to 3. Within our Formal Curriculum, certain foundation subjects from the UK National Curriculum play a slightly different role than they would in many mainstream school contexts. History and Geography for example, are not taught discreetly. Instead, learners encounter these foundation subjects, through our rolling plan of termly themes, and use them as contexts for developing key skills such as those relating to Literacy, Numeracy and ICT.

### Our Curriculum Areas

#### English

As part of English, learners develop their Speaking and Listening (EN1), Reading (EN2) and Writing (EN3). Learners following our Formal Curriculum have discreet lessons in each of the following:

- Guided, shared and independent reading

In guided reading sessions, learners within the same guided reading group explore the same reading book together, but are provided with the scaffolding to read it independently. In shared reading sessions small groups/ the whole class all share a book which may be read by the class teacher. All pupils will also have their own reading book match to their reading level to develop their independent reading skills. All classes will hold a drop everything and read session at least 3 times a week.

Learners will look at a range of different genres and texts including stories, poetry, play scripts and information texts.

- Writing

Learners will be taught how to use and apply phonics to aid their spelling. Learners on the formal pathway will take home spellings to practise each week. Writing skills will be taught as part of discrete English lessons with a focus on grammar, vocabulary and punctuation. Learners will be taught how to compose sentences and short pieces of writing for different purposes and different audiences. These skills will be reinforced in all areas of the curriculum, for example writing up a recount of a science experiment or writing a diary extract from a person in history.

- Phonics

In Phonics sessions, learners are taught the letters and sounds, which make up words. Alternatively, more able learners with MLD, with a secure grasp of phonics, spend time in these sessions, working on the development of their spelling. We use a range of approaches to teaching Phonics, believing that it takes “whatever works” to lay the important foundations for reading development, for each individual learner within our school. The most widely used approaches are ‘Jolly Phonics’ for younger learners and ‘Read, Write Inc.’ for older learners.

In line with recommendations in the Rochford Review learners on this pathway will be assessed using the interim pre-key stage standards for learners working below the standard of the national curriculum tests alongside individual targets.

### My Communication

In this curriculum area, learners develop their expressive and receptive skills through speaking and listening, roleplay and drama activities. A key focus will be on developing social interaction and communication skills both within the classroom and in the wider community in order to develop pupils for independent living for example greeting their peers, ordering an item in a shop or conducting a mock job interview. In addition specific speech and language targets drawn up by the Speech Therapist will be worked upon.

In line with recommendations in the Rochford Review learners on this pathway will be assessed using the interim pre-key stage standards for learners working below the standard of the national curriculum tests alongside individual targets.

### Maths

Maths is taught both across the curriculum, as well as through discreet lessons. Our approach is to enable learners to connect and contextualise their mathematical understandings in real-world situations and across subjects. For example, a 'Maths' lesson could involve running a stall for Enterprise week or measuring ingredients for a food technology lesson.

We avoid teaching narrow strands of Maths in isolation from one another. We want learners to be interacting with important concepts from all strands of Mathematics continually to develop learner's ability to generalise and apply skills learnt in a range of situations.

In line with recommendations in the Rochford Review learners on this pathway will be assessed using the interim pre-key stage standards for learners working below the standard of the national curriculum tests alongside individual targets.

### My Thinking

Developing thinking skills is a primary aim in all that we do. Thinking skills are the mental processes that we apply when we seek to make sense of experience. Thinking skills enable us to integrate each new experience into the schema that we are constructing of "how things are". Thinking Skills are mental processes we use to do things like: solve problems, make decisions, ask questions, construct plans, evaluate ideas, organise information and create objects.

This curriculum area develops thinking skills in their broadest sense. In 'My Thinking', learners encounter situation-based and contextualised problem-solving activities. This curriculum area explores investigating and exploring, making connections, memory, awareness of self and others and working through a problem. This area explores patterns and sequences, social and moral dilemmas, language for thinking and ways of finding new information.

Thinking skills are integrated into the curriculum through less directive approaches, the use of play, as well as open ended and exploratory activities.

Learning in this area is assessed against individual targets.

### Myself/My Body

Through this curriculum area, learners enhance their overall health and well-being. Learners participate in physical education and swimming sessions. They are given opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills. Learners are taught about their body and changes as they grow including puberty and sex education at a level appropriate to their age and ability. They also learn to look after their body through personal care, healthy eating and safer lifestyle choices. This curriculum area also has a strong emotional and social dimension. Learners are supported to understand their feelings and their behaviours.

Students will access a wide range of physical activities aimed at promoting physical fitness and developing life-long interests and habits.

Learning in this area is assessed against individual targets.

### How My World Works

Learners develop their knowledge and understanding of the world through accessing elements of History, Geography, Science and R.E. main objectives in this area centre on developing general knowledge. We believe our students need an awareness of world events both past and present as well as awareness of the world around them, both that which they can access and that which is remote.

This curriculum area focuses on practical skills and understanding. Areas of study include being safe in the world, choosing and using technology, living on our planet, materials, sounds, cause and effect and discovery.

Learning in this area is assessed against individual targets.

### My Creativity

Students access opportunities for creative development through Art, Design and Technology, Dance and Music. These may be taught discretely or through a cross-curricular thematic unit.

This curriculum provides a meaningful context for learners to develop, within the priority areas of communication, cognition (thinking) and/or personal and social development. It also creates opportunities for the transference and generalisation of class-based learning. It covers the areas of creating and making, discovering different cultures, interacting and working with others, likes and dislikes.

Learning in this area is assessed against individual targets.

## Me and My Community

In this curriculum area, learners gain a heightened understanding of the people around them. They explore the diversity within their class and within their school, looking at areas such as religion and heritage. They also explore the local area and how to access its services. There is an emphasis on skills for participating in the community, such as voting or self-advocacy. This curriculum area also explores global citizenship, as well as rights and responsibilities. Areas of learning covered include my school, my role in the community, the local area and the wider world.

PSHCE underpins much of the learning in this area as learners develop the knowledge and understandings for making and maintaining relationships based on respect, healthy and safe lifestyles, and participating in active Citizenship.

Learning in this area is assessed against individual targets.

## Life Skills

The development of life skills is a primary aim in the formal curriculum as we aim to prepare our students for independent or semi-independent living. All students will access learning in the following areas: Cooking, Shopping, Home management, Personal safety, Personal hygiene, Road safety, Independent travel, Dressing skills, Work experience / vocational skills, Social skills, Constructive use of leisure time, ICT at home and in the community.

Learning in this area is assessed against individual targets.

## Learning across the Curriculum

At the formal stage, the following are not curriculum areas in their own right, but are taught and assessed across the curriculum:

- ICT
- SMSC (Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural aspects of learning)
- Play-Based Learning
- SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)

## The Role of themes in the Formal Curriculum

Specific Maths and English skills may be taught as discrete lessons. However in order to ensure our learners generalise and apply skills learnt aspects of these subjects will be taught across all curriculum areas as appropriate.

We have a schedule of half termly topics in place to provide a context for learners to engage with the curriculum. The idea of these topics is to provide varied contexts for learning. Aspects on the topic schedule for older learners are not intended to be a “progression” from those taught to younger learners (who may in fact be attaining at a higher level). Instead, aspects on the topic schedule for older learners are instead designed to provide greater variety and age appropriateness. The delivery of topics will be tailored to the needs and interests of learners in each particular class.

## Final Destinations

Staff continuously assess which students have the potential to become formal learners. Our definition of a formal learner is a student who is most likely to gain accreditation at Entry Level 1 by the end of year 11 in English and Maths.

We may have learners who are working on the cusp of the formal curriculum, but who due to their age or learning styles are placed on the Horizon pathway and teachers plan to meet their needs through differentiating the semiformal curriculum. These are students may continue to follow a semi-formal curriculum with aspects of a more formal curriculum even if they are unlikely to achieve an Entry Level 1 qualification by the end of their school career. These students may demonstrate an aptitude or enjoyment in acquiring more formal skills and are still making progress.

Students in Year 9 and beyond study for a range of different accreditations including functional skills and entry level pathways. We run a 3 year cycle from year 9 to allow our learners the greatest opportunity to receive maximum accreditations when they leave school at 16. Students capable of achieving Entry Level 1 or above higher level are encouraged to do so in order to access appropriate opportunities when leaving school, such as further education and employment.

Some students may not be capable of achieving an Entry Level 1 qualification in English and Maths. These students will still access English and Maths in order to maintain skills already acquired and to learn to apply knowledge and skills in functional ways. The outcomes of English and Maths sessions may be focused on developing skills such as independence or specific thinking skills such as problem solving.

## Acknowledgements

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