**Northern Counties School Curriculum Policy**

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**1. Context**

The Education Act 2002 requires all state schools in England to provide pupils with a curriculum that:

* Is broad and balanced.
* Promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, including developing character and building cultural capital.
* Prepares pupils/students for opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life.
* Follows the national curriculum for England, including religious education and sex and relationships education for secondary-aged pupils.

To complement this, we use a person-centred approach to curriculum provision at Northern Counties School.

We address each pupil's needs and aim to engage all students in learning fully.

* Overcoming barriers to learning
* Working with motivators
* Focusing on students’ wellbeing and mental health

The curriculum at Northern Counties School is complex, as we are an all-age school from 3-19 with four distinct learner populations in Hillcrest (complex autism, staffing ratio of at least 1:1), some use of individual teaching rooms, Armstrong (Higher Functioning Autism), Keller (Deaf) and Stephenson (PMLD and complex medical needs). This means we have five Key Stages (plus EYFS) and cater for up to ninety-five pupils.

* Despite its complex structure, our curriculum ensures that all our pupils have the best opportunities, as appropriate to their age, ability, and entitlement. We have high expectations – we believe that all pupils can achieve, and through our creative and themed curriculum we ensure they have opportunities to achieve by promoting our core value where pupil needs are met, enabling social and academic achievement with the highest possible outcomes.

The curriculum focuses on developing key skills that improve learning and performance in education, work, and life, preparing learners for leaving school.

These skills include communication (including literacy), working with others and developing social skills, improving the pupil’s learning and performance, and problem-solving. For pupils/students with an autism spectrum condition and associated learning difficulties, these skills are fundamental to participation and achievement in the curriculum and personal development, including independence.

Northern Counties School has high expectations and ambitions for all its pupils in all aspects of school life. It will not import low expectations of its pupils, particularly where these could be linked to previous inappropriate school settings, disrupted schooling or inadequate assessment.

**2. Learning Environment – All Classes**

The classroom should promote effective learning. We expect that all pupils will experience consistently high-quality learning environments.

We expect that every classroom should have the following:

* the school vision is displayed.
* the school’s key expectations are displayed.
* a timetable is displayed.
* Pupil work displayed (see "display policy" below)
* Appropriately furnished classrooms with layout determined by pupil need.
* Staff areas and work areas are marked and kept tidy.
* Class reward systems displayed and linked to the school merit system.
* all classrooms will be clean, tidy, and uncluttered.

The curriculum at Northern Counties School adopts a child-centred, child-centred approach. It is arranged into flexible pathways: EYFS pathway, pre-formal pathway, informal pathway, semi-formal pathway, formal pathway, and Key Stage 4.

Each pathway has its own teaching and learning approach, bespoke to each child according to their need, abilities, and interests. These pathways have flexibility, meaning that some students can move through the models, offering challenge and ambition for all learners.

The curriculum is taught through a thematic approach to ensure our learners are motivated, engaged, and excited about their learning journeys to succeed and reach their potential. This also enhances connectivity across the school.

EYFS Pathway: These learners experience an immersive play and learning environment. 1:1 staff encourage child-led learning and exploration, focusing on developing enquiry skills and a love of learning.

Pre-formal pathway: These learners experience a wide range of cognitive, physical, and medical needs and require at least 1:1 support. Their communication is often pre-intentional, and we develop more purposeful interactions through staff responses. The focus is on building skills for learners to make choices, build relationships and exert control to enhance their quality of life.

Informal Pathway: These learners follow a ‘flow of the day’ approach to the curriculum, supported by staff, usually on a 1:1 basis, sometimes a 2:1 ratio initially. These learners are developing their relationships and joint attention. The focus is on pupils making choices to enable them to access a wide range of learning opportunities.

Semi-formal pathway: These learners participate in a broad, balanced, and varied timetable. Many learners may need 1:1 adult support to keep safe and may need to learn about environmental and situational dangers. Communication may be verbal but is supported in a Total Communication environment. The continuity of staying with one teacher for most of the day helps reduce anxiety around many environmental changes and transitions.

Northern Counties School educates and supports children and young people with autism, enabling them to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to translate their aspirations into positive outcomes through access to a broad and challenging curriculum alongside pupils at mainstream schools where appropriate. We focus on academic and social behaviour outcomes for all pupils to prepare them for life beyond school and a transition to adult life that includes paid employment, university or college placement, apprenticeships, successful social relationships, independent living, and meaningful participation in their local community.

We provide a distinctive and challenging curriculum that enables access to the National Curriculum at broadly age-appropriate levels; is personalised to meet individual learners' needs, allowing each pupil to reach their full learning potential; encourages pupils to work towards gaining national qualifications; where appropriate, both academic and vocational to go on to live a productive and fulfilled life; is underpinned by evidence-based approaches to teaching, learning and assessment; encourages and enhances the self-worth of every pupil; focuses on and celebrates our pupils’ strengths and successes.

We are committed to supporting the development of pupils' social behaviour and achieving academic success. We recognise that we will not create expected academic achievement unless we support increases in social behaviour. The school is beginning to implement a SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support) based curriculum, which will inform individual curriculum provision and demonstrate progress in social and non-academic areas of development.

Individual subject areas have their policy reviewed in September of each year.

**3. Equal Opportunities**

Teaching approaches and resources will enable all pupils to have.

Equal opportunities to participate in the school's curriculum regardless of their culture, gender, or religion**.**

**4. Primary Curriculum**

The primary curriculum is topic-based, with a new theme for coverage each half-term that links to the Primary National Curriculum. Each class has their own teacher and teaching assistant(s) and are taught by these staff in their classroom for most of the teaching time.

Topics are differentiated according to chronological age, cognitive ability, special educational needs, and disabilities, allowing all pupils to access suitable challenges. Phonics is also taught daily through phonics groups, allowing pupils to access provision in other classes according to ability and need.

**5. EYFS/KS1**

These classes are taught through a play-based curriculum, following the topic-based theme, but this can change direction according to pupil interests. Pupil learning is documented through various types of observation. Pupil work in EYFS is recorded through learning journeys; Earwig and pupils move onto workbooks by Year 2 according to their needs and abilities.

All children in EYFS/KS1 have a named key worked that provides close contact and shares observation information with parents/carers at home. A qualified paediatric first aid staff member is always available to this group.

**6. Hillcrest Provision**

At Northern Counties School, there are separate provisions for pupils with Autism. Some pupils, in time, will have access to individual workbays in their classroom. Some pupils may have their workroom next to their home classroom. All pupils have access to a learning break outdoor space for sensory regulation. There are separate entrances around the provision, which aids class transitions.

All Hillcrest classrooms will have (in addition to those outlined in section 2)

* visual timetable in use (unless due to PDA one is not used, this will be written in individual pupil’s PSP)
* reading/book area
* Central group work area, with interactive whiteboard
* Individual work bays/areas
* Communicate in Print used in displays.
* Low arousal environment that is sympathetic to sensory needs, where needed
* Areas to be labelled with Communicate in Print, kept tidy and free from unnecessary clutter.
* Now and Next boards, In-schedule (Green/Red) task boards
* A Phonics display detailing relevant code.
* Photographs or written names of staff (as appropriate to the group) to show pupils’ who they work with.

**7. Armstrong Provision**

How does this differ from Hillcrest – what is bespoke about environment/provision?

Learners within the Armstrong department are taught in small class groups within a formal class setting. Learners have access to individual worktables as well as paired workstations.

Unlike the Hillcrest provision, learners in the Armstrong department are staffed with a lower staffing ratio.

Learners can access a movement and sensory room to support their self-regulation and sensory needs. This further enables learners to reengage in learning tasks following this input. All learners can access an outdoor area for break times and sensory regulation.

All classrooms in the Armstong department will have (in addition to those outlined in section 2)

* A visual timetable
* A phonics display detailing relevant code and Visual Phonics pictures to support learning formal phonics.
* Central group work area, with interactive whiteboard
* Communicate in Print used in displays.
* Low arousal environment that is sympathetic to sensory needs, where needed
* Now and Next boards, In-schedule (Green/Red) task boards
* Photographs or written names of staff (as appropriate to the group) to show pupils’ who they work with.

**8. Keller Provision**

How does this differ from Hillcrest – what is bespoke about environment/provision?

**Learners within our deaf provision are taught in small class groups within a formal class setting. If some learners need access to individual work bays, this will be included in the main classroom. Learners can access an outside space for break times or sensory regulation.**

**All classrooms in Keller will have (in addition to those outlined in section 2)**

* **A visual timetable**
* **BSL signed symbols used in displays.**
* **A phonics display detailing relevant code and Visual Phonics pictures to support learning formal phonics.**
* **An appropriate acoustic environment that promotes optimum listening through amplification**
* **Access to Soundfield equipment to maximise listening opportunities when in larger groups.**
* **Support staff qualified in British Sign Language or native BSL users.**
* **Lessons planned and delivered by Qualified Teachers of the Deaf**
* **Access to deaf and hearing role models to support learners in communication and language.**

**9. Stephenson Provision**

Stephenson department learners fall under the PMLD umbrella and have many physical and medical needs. The whole school thematic curriculum is embedded creatively into teacher and therapist planning through the engagement model. Our young people require various position changes throughout the day due to health needs, which means learning can look quite different in Stephenson and includes everything from standing to lying down.

Learners are taught in small classes of no more than six, and each class is set up with clean and dirty sinks, space to store feeding equipment and prepare feed, a fridge, and lockable cupboards for medication.

Each classroom has access to space to store chairs, standing frames and other equipment used for learning and therapy needs. General classroom equipment consists of interactive whiteboards, height-adjustable tables, plinths and “achieve” beds and hoists.

Stephenson learners use various communication methods, such as objects of reference, symbols, and EyeGaze- all found or displayed in the learning environment. Communication work often occurs outside the classroom and may be built into therapeutic sessions, e.g. rebound and hydrotherapy.

**8. Displays of Pupil Work**

**Aims and Objectives:**

* To create a stimulating and quality environment
* To show pride and respect for the school environment and the children’s work and to celebrate achievement across all abilities.
* To inform and share with others.
* To illustrate high standards and expectations.
* To detail curriculum content and pupil learning

**Display areas:**

It is the class teacher's responsibility to ensure that the displays in their classroom and allocated areas meet the standards of the display policy. Each class area needs a maths, literacy and working theme/foundation subject display board relevant to the current topic.

The additional display board you are responsible for in your allocated area of the corridor needs to display either a range of children’s best work across a range of abilities or could be used to share a special event, for example, ‘Maths Outside the Classroom.’ A display in every room should show examples of pupils. Communication.

**Backing and borders**

* Colours should be relevant to the curriculum theme and work to be displayed.
* One or two appropriate colours must be selected to create the border. A simple and effective way to do this is by layering one thick border and one thin.
* Please be mindful when stapling backing, borders, and mounted work to ensure work is secured effectively and sagging is avoided!
* Staples should be placed neatly.
* Corners should be straight and neat.

**Mounting**

* All work should be mounted.
* All edges of mounted work should be cut straight with a guillotine, NEVER scissors.
* An equal 1 cm mount around the work

**Layout**

* Work must be placed in straight lines unless purposely designed to be at angles.
* Work must be evenly spaced and spread across the board to avoid sparse areas.

**Title and labelling**

* Titles need to be printed, cut out and placed centrally at the top or centre of the board. Thought needs to be given to the font size depending on the size of the board.
* A description of the work displayed must be included, for example, "We created Mexican ‘Eye of Gods’ as part of our ‘Hola! Mexico’s topic, by weaving with brightly coloured wool on a lollipop stick frame."
* Detailed description of pupil work (KS4) does not need to be Communicated in Print unless appropriate to the group's needs.
* All work should be labelled with the children’s name.
* Other labels should be included, for example, keywords.
* Labels should be printed and follow the same mounting expectations as work.
* Displays in corridor areas, near sinks or in reach of young children should be laminated to preserve presentation quality.

**Responsibilities**

All display is the responsibility of the class teacher. Teachers must make all decisions about their display. This includes choosing colours of backing and borders, design, and work layout. TAs can then prepare work, i.e. mount and laminate and put up chosen backing paper and borders. If TAs are putting up displays on behalf of teachers, work should initially only be pinned and then shared with the teacher before being fixed into place. TAs should not put up displays during lesson time. Directed time can be allocated.

**Timescales**

* Theme displays should be current, i.e. relevant to the current topic (for working displays) or previous topic (for celebration of children’s work).
* Core subject displays should be relevant to teaching and learning and should be changed at least termly.
* Display boards should be changed on a rotation, one at a time, to avoid bare walls and lack of display. The Autumn half-term should change the first boards.

**Resources**

* Display coordinators will order backing paper, borders, and mounting paper for general stock as the budget allows.
* If any specific materials are required, please request via e-mail.
* If teachers want to include materials such as textiles, 3D objects, found objects or anything else, please speak to display coordinators for advice or inspiration. The Senior Leadership Team and Governors will monitor the display. This policy will be reviewed in the summer of 2018.

**9. Expectations of Pupil Work**

From Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4, pupil workbooks are colour-coded as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| SUBJECT AREA | COLOUR |
| English | Yellow |
| Maths | Blue |
| Science | Green |
| Humanities | Purple |
| RE / Beliefs & Values / Cultural Studies | Purple |
| Food Technology | Purple |
| Art & Design Technology | Black |

Pupil workbooks should be labelled with the correct label. These are stored XXXXXXXXXXXXX. These can only be accessed from a terminal/device with communication in print installed. The fonts and pictures should not be altered in any way.

Where possible, pupils should write their names in pencil (primary) or black pen (secondary), using correct letter formation (initial capital letter, followed by lower case). When pupils cannot write their name, staff should hand write it in black pen using the criteria outlined.

Workbooks must be graffiti-free, including the covers, which should be reinforced with suitable restorative practices.

Any work, photographs or evidence should be trimmed down when being stuck into books so that it does not protrude from the edge of the book.

Marking and Feedback Policy must be followed.

As a minimum expectation, there should be evidence for 100% of workbook lessons. Where lessons have been practical or oral, a suitable notation should denote this.

An up-to-date assessment grid should be securely fixed into every workbook inside the cover (and ensuing pages if necessary). New workbooks need only have the current assessment grids. This applies to core subjects currently.

Practical subjects (PE, Forest School, music) should be recorded through pupils’ skills assessments with formal termly evidence showing where pupils are in their learning and the next steps.