

Curriculum Policy

Little Acorns School



Growth Learning Therapies

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Here at Little Acorns School we provide a broad and balanced curriculum based around the Cornerstones Curriculum, a nationally recognised approach for delivering outstanding learning opportunities for children.

What is the Cornerstones Curriculum?

The Cornerstones Curriculum is a creative and thematic approach to learning. It is based on a child-centred pedagogy called The Four Cornerstones and is delivered through Imaginative Learning Projects (ILPs) and Knowledge Rich Projects (KRPs), which provide a rich menu of exciting and motivating learning activities that make creative links between all aspects of children's learning. We believe children learn better when they are encouraged to use their imagination and apply their learning to engaging contexts. Our curriculum provides many learning challenges throughout the academic year that require children to solve problems, apply themselves creatively and express their knowledge and understanding effectively. Cornerstones is used at a stage that suits the children's needs; this may not be a direct correlation to the children's chronological age. Due to the needs of our children, and the fact that many have missed chunks of their education through non-attendance in previous settings, it is important to find those gaps.

Through Cornerstone Curriculum, the outcomes of EHCP's and our knowledge of the children at Little Acorns the aim is to create the opportunities for pupils to be successful and develop a positive self-image while fostering a life-long love of learning. Every pupil at Little Acorns is entitled to a rich and varied curriculum which is challenging and inspiring and which offers every individual the opportunity to fulfil their potential to the highest possible standard and from which they can achieve personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

Fundamentally, we understand that we are all individuals. Our approach is not a 'one size fits all' but instead offers a tailored, rich, and stimulating education experience for all our pupils, according to their needs. We recognise that many of our pupils encounter additional challenges in terms of their well-being, learning needs, early experiences of school and anxieties about being in school. Therefore, everything we do is crafted to deliver a bespoke education, carefully nurturing each pupil to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved – and their life chances are improved.

Our curriculum is supported by rigorous planning and it is clear what end points the curriculum is building towards, and what pupils will need to know and be able to do at those endpoints. We work to securing each pupil's EHCP outcomes and small step targets. These targets are set within a multi-agency forum and detail the objectives required to have been achieved by the end of the key stage they are working in. We work to this end point with the children's Provision Maps and Personalised Learning Plans, key to the planning of each subject/intervention. We continually build, develop and adapt pupil individual provision plans to outline how we will achieve the targets.

Assessments are ongoing but we formally report on progress to parents/carers three times a year. We are compliant with the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the schedule of the Education (ISS) Regulations 2014.

Classes groups and curriculum content are not categorised simply by year group. Groups are categorised by learning styles, sensory needs and class grouping is completed considering the outcomes of the EHCP's, the stage the child is at and taking into account different personalities within the school.

Developing valuable life skills and skills to develop independence can be very difficult for children and young people who have attachment and/or educational learning difficulties. Specific time is dedicated for pupils to develop these skills in a safe and nurturing environment.

We have an emphasis on the basics of reading, English, 'spelling, punctuation, and grammar' (SPAG), and teaching functional numeracy. Reading is at the heart of the curriculum and reading is prioritised. We recognise that having a 'functional reading age' (age 8.0years+) is pivotal in enabling our pupils to access a broader and richer curriculum. On entry, many of our pupils have rapidly fallen behind their peers therefore we act quickly to close the gap and work towards accelerated progress. Our intent is for all pupils to read at an

age-appropriate level through rigorous and sequential assessments so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and retained. These assessments identify barriers to learning and gaps. From this starting point we follow the Read, Write, Inc programme, leading onto RWI Literacy and Language when the children have reached this functional level. Weaknesses are addressed quickly so that potential can be unlocked. Pupils are encouraged to adopt a problem-solving mindset and in doing so, build resilience and independence.

Our individualised assessment and teaching of phonics correlates directly with 'Read, Write, Inc' and provides a sharp focus to enable us to sort out any confusions, target gaps in learning and evaluate impact. Barriers to learning are identified in order to implement tailor made programmes with appropriate coverage, content, structure, and sequencing, to unlock the potential of our struggling readers. The texts we use provide opportunities for speaking, listening, and writing and connect closely to pupils' phonics knowledge. Our systems, methods and resources facilitate reciprocal links between reading and writing and ensure all pupils have every opportunity to gain the phonics knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read for meaning and the skills to communicate, giving them the foundations for future learning and better outcomes in life.

We encourage pupils to become independent thinkers allowing them freedom to explore, create and think critically and actively learn. Where possible they will be encouraged to challenge themselves to build their confidence and resilience, given the opportunity to develop the capacity to surprise themselves and others and to become confident and self-assured. We use questioning, praise and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem. They are taught to be observant, investigative, curious, determined, imaginative, adventurous, co-operative and to use reasoning. We have realistic, yet challenging expectations and plan opportunities to extend their knowledge, experiences, and interests, motivating and supporting every pupil to reach their individual potential. All planning is based on each individual pupil to ensure their goals are realistic and achievable. Adult led and child-initiated activities are equally important; adults interact sensitively, encouraging perseverance and practice, reinforcing that we all learn at a different pace and can all learn when things go wrong.

A therapeutic approach is key to the daily teaching of all the children. All children are offered a therapeutic plan which includes (but is not exclusive to) Equine Therapy, Music Therapy, Therapeutic Life Story and Art Therapy.. These help us to ensure that all children are able to achieve in line with their potential. We address cognitive and emotional development as one cannot make good progress without the other. Little Acorns School provides experiences that help the children to grow in every sense of the word.

Our environment and delivery of our curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning;

Playing and exploring – pupils will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

Active learning – pupils will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties to allow them the opportunity to enjoy their achievements.

Creating and thinking critically – we encourage and support pupils to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

1. Curriculum aims

Our curriculum aims to:

- Provide a broad and balanced education for all pupils that's coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge for skills and future learning and employment

- Enable pupils to develop knowledge, understand concepts and acquire skills, and be able to choose and apply these in relevant situations
- Support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Support pupils' physical development and responsibility for their own health, and enable them to be active
- Promote a positive attitude towards learning
- Ensure equal access to learning for all pupils, with high expectations for every pupil and appropriate levels of challenge and support
- Have a high academic/vocational/technical ambition for all pupils
- To meet the outcomes of each child's EHCP.
- Equip pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life
- Be able to see clear links between different aspects of their learning
- Where able. develop a deep and rich subject knowledge
- Understand the value and purpose of their learning and see its relevance to its past, present and future
- Develop and demonstrate curiosity and creativity
- Be able to self-regulate in readiness for learning
- Growth through learning and therapies

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements for independent schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum as per the Independent School Standards and the programmes of study we have chosen to follow.

It also reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014](#) and [Equality Act 2010](#).

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The advisory board

The advisory board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

The governing board will also ensure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
- Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN)
- It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum

3.2 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements
- The governing board is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- The governing board is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEN

4. Organisation and planning

At Little Acorns School we strive to deliver a curriculum that is accessible to all our pupils. We aim to offer a balanced, interesting and relevant curriculum which is created around the individual learners. The curriculum is broken into 6 themes throughout the year, the same theme is covered by the whole school with differing outcomes to meet the individual needs of the children across all key stages.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum and is explicitly taught as a standalone session each day. We recognise that this is the core skill that will help in all areas of development and progress both inside and outside of education. Our intent is for all pupils to read at a near age-appropriate level as they can, through rigorous and sequential lessons and assessment. A Read, Write, Inc phonics screening is completed upon entry and the individuals reading plan put together as a result. All children have a 45-60 minute Read, Write, Inc session daily. As well as Read, Write, Inc interventions such as Language Through Colour and Language for Thinking are used to help develop both spoken and written English. This is linked to work with the Speech and Language Therapist where necessary.

As well as reading we give emphasis in our curriculum to the development of:

- Numeracy Skills with all children being introduced to Numicon: Breaking Barriers Scheme (unless they are more able whereby White Rose Maths Schemes of work are utilised as a spring board for planning)
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health, including SRE (see individual policy)
- Paws. B Mindfulness
- Physical Skills including PE, swimming, individual therapies, using the community and Life Skills. This also includes daily sensory circuits and activities.

- Outdoor Learning and connecting to the environment (Forest Schools and woodland bootcamps). Some children have the opportunity to attend a local Young Farmer group.
- SMSC- including the fundamental British Values. We use the resources provided by CEOP to support this learning.
- AQA Unit Awards
- Academic Progress
- Topic work is based on the likes/dislikes and interests of the children, whilst ensuring coverage of the National Curriculum where appropriate.
- Therapeutic Interventions such as Equine Therapy, Music Therapy, Play Therapy and Yoga/Meditation.
- Makaton signs and symbols are used with all the children and utilised where possible within the curriculum.

Cornerstone Curriculum Maestro is used to support us in implementing an ambitious curriculum. This supports us in designing, delivering, teaching and assessing our curriculum. Curriculum Maestro is used to design and plan a curriculum that ensure progression of key knowledge and skills, sequenced and adapted to meet the individual needs of the children in our school.

5. Inclusion

We adapt the Curriculum for individual learners according to their needs, whilst respecting the fact that all children have the right to a broad, balanced and relevant education which provides continuity and progression. We recognise children's strengths, needs and interests and build on these to promote achievement and success. We identify our children's strengths through the Annual Review Process and plan and adapt the provision and learning opportunities to meet these needs. Each learner has an individualised Provision Map which is regularly updated to reflect the individual needs of the learner. Support staff, teaching staff, carers, social workers and parents (where suitable) are involved with and made aware of the outcomes on these plans.

Children who have suffered trauma, and have additional needs, have often had turbulence in their schooling before they arrive at Little Acorns. We seek to engage children so that a baseline can be sought, but sometimes this can be difficult. We believe that is important to understand each pupil in order that the curriculum is well matched, planned and sequenced so that they are able to engage in the lessons. We adapt the curriculum to meet the individual; we do not expect the individual to adapt.

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able pupils
- Pupils with low prior attainment
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Pupils with SEN
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities can study every National Curriculum subject, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEN policy and information report.

6. Monitoring arrangements

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Curriculum is achieved by:

- ◆ Observation of lessons with a specific focus
- ◆ Staff Development meetings between all staff
- ◆ Use of pupil data: on Classroom Monitor
- ◆ Regular scrutiny of workbooks
- ◆ Termly or annual amendment of curriculum structure dependent on the individual needs of pupils
- ◆ Regular updates of the individual children's Provision Map.

7. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Assessment policy
- SEN policy and information report
- Equality information and objectives
- RSE Policy