



The Holden  
School

# Curriculum Policy

Policy Document  
(2021-2022)

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## **Intent:**

### **Introduction**

The Holden School is a Day School for pupils aged 4 to 16 who exhibit social, emotional and mental health and also with ASC. Pupils are placed from a wide range of local authorities and they all have an Educational Health and Care Plan. All of our pupils have experienced significant barriers to learning, due to either their developmental profile, negative life experiences, or both. Before joining our school many have been unable to access a school-based curriculum effectively, and many have experienced multiple placement breakdowns. As a result, pupils start their time at The Holden School with significant gaps in their learning, and all pupils are working below age-related expectations, many are working significantly below.

At The Holden School, the curriculum is every planned learning experience the pupils have as a member of the school, both learnt formally within a lesson or informally outside the classroom throughout the whole school day. It is all the planned activities that we organise in order to promote learning, personal growth, and development. Teachers, support staff, therapists and instructors structure these experiences to ensure that they have the most positive effect on the attainment, progress and personal development of all pupils. Our curriculum also incorporates the opportunistic learning experiences that occur throughout the day, and which staff pro-actively seek out and capitalise on.

### **AIMS:**

At The Holden School, we ensure access to the curriculum areas that are listed in the Independent School Standards (2014). In accordance with this, we undertake to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of each young person based on the terms of their Education, Health and Care Plan. Most of our young people receive full-time supervised education, in which they experience a curriculum that includes a range of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative aspects appropriate to their age, aptitude and stage of development. The overriding aim of the curriculum is to achieve the best possible outcomes for the young people in terms of individual learning, independence, personal growth and development.

Although we admit learners from as young as four years old, from day one our focus is on preparing them to leave us at age 16. Regardless of the age at which our pupils join us, our priority from the outset is to ensure they are ready for the next stage of their journey, be that work, additional education or an apprenticeship. Our curriculum, therefore, is designed to prepare our pupils for life in modern Britain, and to address any barriers to learning they experience as a result of their autism, social, emotional and mental health conditions, learning difficulties, additional diagnoses, or past experiences. We understand that at The Holden School the learning journey, personal circumstances and educational and personal outcomes for every pupil are entirely unique, and so our curriculum strives to provide pathways to vocational and academic qualifications that match the capacity and potential of each learner.

We aim to:

- Help young people to develop positive feelings of self-worth and confidence.
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum, including a focus on independence skills that is inclusive and accessible to all
- Help prepare children and young people for the next stages in their life
- Deliver activities that provide suitable learning challenges, giving every young person the opportunity to experience success and achieve as much as possible.
- Devise individual approaches and interventions, in response to the curriculum, to match young people's diverse learning needs, interests and strengths.
- Teach young people to have an awareness of their own spiritual development, understand right from wrong and have an appreciation of British Values.
- Provide a curriculum that is free from partisan political views.

### **Curriculum Design**

Our pupils require us to have an agile and reflexive approach to curriculum design. The need for our curriculum to be flexible, adaptable and robust enough to meet the ever changing demands of the modern world, and best prepare our pupils for a life within it, is the cornerstone of this policy, and our curriculum will also be shaped by and adapted to the needs of our diverse and changing pupil population.

We offer two interwoven curriculum pathways, and as a specialist setting, all our pupils benefit from accessing a blend of each. Our formal curriculum offer is comprised of the National Curriculum programmes of study, and extends as far as GCSE examinations. Our personalised curriculum element is focused around each child having an Individual Learning Plan. Underpinning this is our obligation to meet the specific individual needs outlined in each pupil's Education Health and Care Plan; these objectives are central to the evidence of learning we capture on a daily basis.

While not bound to as an independent provider, our school is committed to covering the 2014 National Curriculum and its programmes of study. This commitment must however be consistent with any statement of SEN or Education Health Care Plan for any young person, which may well prioritise particular subjects or key areas of learning.

Our curriculum is designed on the following 10 principles:

a) Meeting individual needs is set in the context of a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum that helps pupils understand the world in which they live.

b) The most significant barriers to learning for some pupils stem from negative (or restricted) social and educational experiences in the past. Establishing and sustaining engagement in learning is key.

c) The three priorities in our curriculum design are functional literacy, functional numeracy, and personal development.

- d) The wellbeing of all learners is fundamental to their success in school and beyond.
- e) Outstanding progress is possible for every pupil at The Holden School, but will look different for every pupil. The curriculum should be sufficiently flexible to enable pupils to achieve and exceed the expectations outlined in their personalised targets and Education, Health and Care Plans.
- f) External examinations and accreditation may be appropriate for some pupils, and our curriculum should provide pathways to academic success where that is the case.
- g) Development of communication, sensory processing and emotional regulation skills are fundamental to the progress our pupils make.
- h) The path towards maximum independence and autonomy when leaving us at 16 starts on a pupil's first day at The Holden School.
- i) All pupils are entitled to a curriculum that supports the development of their personal moral values, respect for religious values, and tolerance of other people's backgrounds, beliefs and ways of life
- j) Our pupils may need to be grouped with reference to their needs and cognitive ability, rather than strictly on their chronological age

Approaches used to plan and deliver the curriculum are devised to meet the needs of individual learners, for some this will be through specialist subject focused approaches.

Alongside an academic curriculum, all pupils have an Individual Learning Plan. This was something we developed to facilitate the planning, assessment and recording of progress in relation to an individual learning programme. Our Personalised Curriculum is a person-centred needs-led approach rather than a subject-based and content-driven approach, which has been developed in order to facilitate the planning and assessment of learning for young people to address those need identified in their EHC plans and who don't make progress in a neuro-typical way.

The overall design of our Personalised Curriculum addresses some key issues relating to appropriate learning approaches for young people with learning difficulties. It is made up of five main cross-curricular areas; communication and interaction (which includes literacy, cognition and learning (which includes numeracy), personal, social and mental health, sensory and physical (including occupational therapy), and preparing for adulthood. These areas correlate directly to the young person's EHC planning document, and aim to work towards outcomes that are decided upon by a multi-disciplinary team.

Learning intentions are then assessed and progressed upon using a 4-scale approach of development- specifically Prompting, Fluency, Maintenance and Generalisation.

This curriculum ensures that learning is centred on what that person needs and wants at its very core, and means progress is achievable for all.

## Implementation

The first steps of target setting for the young people is to find out where they were in their previous placement, if appropriate; from this point the teacher will set a range of tasks and sessions based on this level in order to gauge whether they need to challenge or support at a lower level. They will then baseline the child using:

Early Star Reader or Star Reader

IXL for Maths

Blackwell Spelling Test

CAT score

Thrive/Motional Assessment

In order to produce next steps and appropriate learning for the young person. This process usually takes a half term at least due to the young person settling in to a new environment.

During this time, the young person will also be seen by a range of specialists at the school, which will further inform how the young person works best, and interventions that may need to be put in place in order for them to extend their learning. These professionals include Occupational therapist and Speech and Language therapists.

The National Curriculum is organised for pupils in the following ways:

### EYFS

Please refer to the school's EYFS Policy

National Curriculum – Key Stage 1 & 2	National Curriculum - Key Stage 3
English Maths Humanities - History, Geography & RE Science, Computing, Design Technology Art and Design, Music PE Plus Outdoor Learning	English Maths Humanities - History, Geography & RE Science, Computing, Design Technology Art and Design, Music PE

Although Key Stage 1 and 2 classes are taught all areas of the curriculum in discrete lessons, half-termly topics provide opportunities to enrich learning and bring together experiences across different subjects.

In Key Stage 3 the curriculum is designed to give pupils access to age-relevant curriculum content (EG Shakespeare or 'Acids and Alkalis'), but delivered at a developmentally

appropriate level. Cross-curricular learning is promoted where possible, but there is not prescribed topic cycle.

National Curriculum – Key Stage 4
Linguistic Mathematical Scientific Technological Human and Social Physical Aesthetic and Creative

In KS4, pupils have further opportunities to develop their own personal interests throughout the curriculum. Due to learning barriers linked to developmental delay and/or time out of school during their previous placements, most pupils have not acquired the academic standards expected of their chronological age when they start at The Holden School. Our emphasis, therefore, is on rate of progress that is measured against the pupil's starting point, rather than age related expectations. We carefully assess our pupils' levels of tolerance so that we are sure that they can successfully meet appropriate challenges. We aim to balance this by also giving pupils opportunities to gain qualifications or accreditations that are not exam-based. It is of the utmost importance to us that our pupils do not have experiences of failure, as these are usually what have led them to withdraw from learning and have contributed significantly to poor emotional wellbeing in their previous educational settings. Staff make use of the AQA Unit awards programmes with all of our pupils in as many areas as possible to assist them to gain certification. This enables all pupils to gain certification which is nationally recognized and appropriate to their own individual needs and also helps to improve pupil self-esteem and confidence. Short courses are also available in independent living and employability as well as more personalised programmes such as animal care, construction and woodwork are offered by alternative provisions that some of our pupils access. Work experience will be set up in areas that have been identified by pupils of interest to them and which can be facilitated through school in partnership with external providers in order to develop both academic and developmental objectives.

Some of our pupils are academically able, but their difficulties managing their anxiety mean that the pressure of taking exams of any kind is counterproductive for them as it would be detrimental to their emotional wellbeing. The use of Functional Skills programmes in KS4 helps prepare pupils through practical skills in English, Maths and IT whilst providing individuals with essential knowledge, skills and understanding as well as practical experience that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in taking their next steps for life after school. With parental permission, pupils will be entered into Functional skills exams at levels determined by staff through their own assessments to ensure they leave school at the end of Year 11 with a qualification relevant to their ability, and which will enable them to engage in a post 16 course of their own choice.

Personal Development at The Holden School covers a significant proportion of our curriculum, including PSHCE, SMSC and British Values, Citizenship and development of Cultural Capital.

Personal development therefore is identified as key in all areas of the school, and addressed by joint working between education and therapy colleagues. In all, that the school offers the key is to provide for the support and challenge that meet individual interests and aspirations. In terms of delivery, the key features of personal and social development are covered in the Key Stage 1 and 2 curriculum through elements of the Coram Scarf programme.

The school strives to ensure that young people leave equipped with the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes to cope with life in the wider world; in particular, to establish positive relationships and to be able to live safe and healthy lifestyles.

Wherever possible, initially pupils will take a test at a lower level than they are capable of, in order to compensate for anxieties (most will never have sat an external test before) and to develop confidence in the whole process in order that they gain the level that staff expect of them and is crucial in the next steps of their education choices. All KS4 pupils have Key skills, IT, PE and PSHE on their timetables, but all other sessions are personalised to take account of their needs in readiness for leaving The Holden School at the end of Year 11.

## **Curriculum Delivery**

### **Structure of the School Day**

The school opens to pupils at 8:45am, and pupils go home at 2:45pm (1:45pm on a Friday). The school day is carefully planned in each class, according to the needs of pupils. There are four main learning activities in each class, each day. These are augmented by several carefully planned and structured, shorter activities to support literacy, numeracy and personal development. Each class submits a timetable for approval to the deputy head teacher. Schemes of Work and Lesson Planning Curriculum planning will reflect both the breadth of the National Curriculum, and our specialist-individualised curriculum. Each subject leader is required to have long and medium term planning of work for all subjects, related, where appropriate, to the national curriculum and AQA requirements. This planning will be followed by all teaching staff and their delivery monitored by subject leaders. Planning sets out how the content of the course is structured, so that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed progressively, and how the teaching is organised. (See additional assessment policy). In order to best meet individual pupil and class needs, teachers have the autonomy to plan individual lessons, or sequences of lessons, in different ways. Teachers are expected to the Curriculum monitoring system (Solar) with evidence of achieved targets.

## **Homework**

When used correctly, homework can be a valuable aid to learning. Used in the wrong circumstances, it can be counter-productive to an individual's progress, and their attitude to school. At The Holden School, we take an entirely individualised approach and encourage all parents to provide opportunities for reading at home, following either the school scheme, or materials in the home. We also know that many of our pupils often find it difficult to generalise learning, ie. transfer newly acquired skills to different settings, and so we also ask parents to encourage their son/daughter to demonstrate the same skills and knowledge they demonstrate in school, at home or in the community.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

*The Headteacher and Deputy Head Teacher will ensure that:*

- They have an oversight of curriculum structure and delivery within the school.
- Detailed and up-to-date schemes of learning are in place for the delivery of courses.
- Schemes of learning are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.
- Levels of attainment and rates of progression are discussed with teachers on a regular basis and that actions are taken where necessary to improve these.
- Overall trends in progress and attainment inform strategic school development planning.

*Subject Coordinators will ensure that:*

- Long term planning is in place for all subjects. Schemes of learning are designed using the school pro-forma and will contain curriculum detail on context, expectations, key skills, learning objectives, learning outcomes, learning activities, differentiation and resources.
- Schemes of learning encourage progression at least in line with national standards.
- There is consistency in terms of curriculum delivery. Schemes of learning are in place and used by all staff delivering a particular course.
- Appropriate awarding bodies and courses are selected so that they best meet the learning needs of our pupils.
- Where necessary an appropriate combination of qualifications or alternative qualifications is offered which best suit the needs of learners.
- Assessment is appropriate to the course and the pupils following particular courses. There should be consistency of approach towards assessment.
- Pupil performance data is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that any necessary changes in terms of curriculum delivery are planned and carried out in a timely fashion.
- They share best practice with other colleagues in terms of curriculum design and delivery.

- They oversee CPD needs with regard to curriculum planning and delivery within their area of responsibility

*Teaching staff and learning support staff will:*

- Ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy.
- Keep up to date with developments in their subjects.
- Have access to, and be able to interpret, data on each pupil to inform the design of the curriculum in order that it best meets the needs of each cohort of pupils.
- Share and exchange information about best practice amongst their colleagues in different schools and through external networks, resulting in a dynamic and relevant curriculum.
- Participate in high quality professional development, working with other teachers to develop their skills in understanding the learning needs of their pupils and how best to address those needs and engage them.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to provide an appropriate range of curriculum opportunities.
- Actively support pupils in their progress through the new curriculum.

*Pupils will:*

- Be treated as partners in their learning, contributing to the design of the curriculum.
- Have their individual needs addressed, within both the school and extending beyond the classroom into the family and community through a curriculum that offers breadth, support and challenge.
- Be given additional support if they start to fall behind in their learning, helping them get back on track quickly.
- receive coordinated support to enable them to make the appropriate curriculum choices

*Parents and carers will:*

- Be consulted about their children's learning and in planning their future education.
- Be confident that their child is receiving a high quality education that is designed to meet their learning needs and which will equip them with the skills they need to thrive throughout their lives.
- Be informed about the curriculum on offer and understand the rationale behind it.
- Support learning at home where possible

## **Impact:**

### Subject Leadership:

Subject leaders have school-wide responsibility for the coordination of their subject. They are required to submit to the headteacher and deputy head teacher a subject development action plan, including detailed plans for enrichment activities throughout the year. Subject leadership forms part of the appraisal and professional development programme for teachers.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Subject Lead</b>
English	Katey Jacobs
Maths	Mana Sahami
Science	Kirby-Faye Clough
History	Jodie Molyneux
Geography	Jodie Molyneux
Art	Michelle Stubbs
Design Technology	Michelle Stubbs
PE	Adam O'Brien
Careers & Duke of Edinburgh	Michelle Stubbs
Computing	Kirby-Faye Clough
PSHCE/SMSC	Natalie Van-Son
RE	Natalie Van-Son
Music	Kirby-Faye Clough

### **Quality Assurance**

The quality of education provided to pupils at Maple Grove is subject to regular and varied assurance activity. These include:

- Termly lesson observations
- Termly pupil progress meetings
- Half-termly supervisions for all teaching and teaching assistant staff
- Work scrutiny, including marking and assessment, and 'deep dive' activities.
- Moderation with subject leaders from other schools within OFG.
- Learning walks with visiting staff, including Clinical colleagues, Quality team members, and governors.

## **Reporting to Parents**

The primary means of reporting on progress to parents is via the Annual Review process, in which detailed feedback is given in relation to the short and long-term objectives identified in Section E of their son or daughter's Education, Health and Care Plan. However, parents are also kept informed of the breadth, depth and quality of the education to their son or daughter via:

- Autumn Term Parents' Evenings
- Mid-year progress report
- End of year report.