

Shepherds Down School Curriculum



Principles:

We believe that every child is entitled to an appropriate, relevant, broad and balanced curriculum,
We believe that any barriers to learning need to be addressed to ensure the curriculum is accessible to every child

We believe the curriculum should prepare all children for the opportunities and experiences of later life, ensuring that they can be as independent as possible, equipped with the necessary skills to be positively included in society.

We believe that whilst the aim of the curriculum will be the same across the school – to ensure children have the skills to be as independent as possible, the content and focus will be different for every child as it will be dependent on their starting point, needs and individual priorities

We believe that children learn best through practical, hands on activities and through outdoor learning opportunities and ensure that our curriculum is delivered in this way.

Curriculum Organisation

The curriculum at Shepherds Down school comprises the school curriculum and identified priorities for learning, the Foundation stage and the National Curriculum.

Core Curriculum

We prioritise the following learning and it forms our core curriculum:

- Functional communication skills
- Cognitive skills – Functional Reading, Writing and Number skills
- Independence – organisational skills, toileting, dressing, eating, life skills (money, cooking, safety), generalising and applying skills
- Personal and Social Development – interaction, turn taking, play, tolerance, coping strategies, emotions, sensory processing skills
- Physical – physio, health and fitness, gross motor, fine motor, swimming, well-being

The core curriculum is directly taught for at least 60% of the school week (3 hours a day), and reinforced through all activities during the school day e.g. snack, playtime

We have 3 interconnecting pathways through the curriculum. Each pathway has the same aim of ensuring that all children have the skills to be as independent as possible however the content and delivery will be different in each one.

Phase 1 - Early stages of Development:

The DfE describes pupils with PMLD as “having complex learning needs in addition to very severe learning difficulties, pupils have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment or a severe medical condition. These children require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for their personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language”

At this school children with PMLD as defined above, follow Phase 1 of the curriculum, an informal curriculum, where learning is mostly processed based. There are four areas of learning – Communication and Interaction, Cognition, Independence and Personal Care and Physical skills. Opportunities for learning along with possible outcomes, based on the Routes for Learning are outlined in the scheme of work for PMLD.

Clear intended learning in the four areas are identified as part of the annual review and are broken down into a termly individual learning plan which will also incorporate any therapy programmes. This learning is addressed through all areas of the curriculum

Phase 2 - Bridging Curriculum:

This group of children are characterised by a high level of self-direction, functioning on a mainly sensory level and needing learning at a very concrete and practical level. For these children the school have written a 'bridging curriculum', which focusses on functional Literacy and Numeracy skills, communication and interaction skills and independence and life skills and has clearly identified end points in the form of 'I can' statements.

Clear intended learning is identified in these aspects for each child each half term and this is addressed through both direct teaching and opportunities to apply, generalise and practice skills through timetabled activities such as cooking, topic and PE. Much of the learning in the phase is also processed based.

Phase 3 - Subject Specific Learning:

Those children that subject specific learning is appropriate for will be taught the subjects which are part of the core curriculum as discrete subjects. There are schemes of work written for Reading and Writing, Mathematics, Communication, PSD and PSHE, all of which have clearly identified end points in the form of 'I can' statements.

Clear intended learning based on prior learning, individual priorities identified in the annual review and next steps in learning are identified for groups/individual each half term.

Topic Approach

Where appropriate, children are taught the relevant content of the other National curriculum subjects – Science, Geography, History, Design and technology, IT, Music and Art to help them understanding their world and as a way of expressing themselves and relaxing.

The school has a curriculum map for the whole school which identifies the topic focus and aspects of PSHE and RE to cover during the half term. The curriculum map takes 4 years to complete.

There is a whole school topic focus for each half term and suggested objectives which identify 3 different aspects of learning.

1. Knowledge based learning which promotes understanding of the world to support independence, which would include how to keep safe, how to access the community, knowledge of cause and effect, how things work
2. Skill based learning – providing the context to practice skills necessary to be as independent as possible, which would include communication, self-help skills, life skills, tolerance, collaboration and social skills
3. Creative/sensory based experiences – promoting an awareness and enjoyment of arts, relaxation skills/emotional regulation, sensory regulation skills.

For some children the topic will provide the focus to achieve identified outcomes in aspects of learning such as Understanding the world, PSHE, RE and develop creative skills. Whereas for some children the topic provides the context to practice skills, focus on individual targets and participate in creative/sensory experiences.

The topic based aspect of our curriculum is designed to provide a range of learning opportunities which can be tailored to the needs and priorities for learning of each child.

This use of topics enables appropriate clear links between subjects to be made to encourage pupils to generalise skills and make connections in their learning.

Generalising Learning

Activities such as trips out, cooking, playtime, snack and shopping trips enhance learning and provide opportunities to generalise skills, particularly communication, Independence and Personal and Social Development

The curriculum provides opportunity for overlearning, repetition, generalising and applying skills and acquiring new knowledge.

Outdoor Learning

Many of the children respond well to learning opportunities outside. We provide opportunities for learning outside whenever this is appropriate and have enhanced the outdoor environment to support this, including a Mud Kitchen, Sensory Garden and Woodland Walk. We have a scheme of work to support this and one of the teachers is trained as a Forest School Instructor and leads activities with classes across the school during the week.

Individual Curriculum

Every child will be following one of the 3 phases of the curriculum and may follow more than one phase during the time they attend Shepherds Down School e.g. moving from Phase 2 to Phase 3.

As part of every child's review of their EHCP, priorities for learning for the coming year are identified. These will be next steps in learning in the phase they are following, identified in the relevant 'I can' statements and will also address any particular priorities for the child e.g. feeding, toileting, keeping safe.

These objectives are identified in the child's Individual Learning Plan which is then broken into smaller steps every 12 weeks over the year. These objectives will be delivered throughout the day by both direct teaching and also opportunities and activities such as playtime, snack time, soft play, trips out.