



## **CURRICULUM POLICY**

Bright Futures School seeks to promote a curriculum that is accessible to all our pupils and which enables them to achieve as highly as possible and to experience academic as well as personal success.

### **AIMS**

All children have a right to a broad, balanced and relevant education which provides continuity and progression and takes individual differences into account. Pupils at Bright Futures School will have access to a curriculum based on the National Curriculum as well as being tailored to individual needs. In addition, we focus on the core difficulties that lie at the heart of autism. These include problems with rigid thinking, managing uncertainty and change, social interaction and understanding and managing emotions. These are the difficulties that are at the root of distressed (challenging) behaviour.

At Bright Futures School, our curriculum involves academic learning but our first priority is to work on these core difficulties rather than just compensating for or working around them. We achieve this by using the development of typical children as our model. Our approach is strongly influenced by the thinking and research behind Relationship Development Intervention (RDI®). Our priority is to support the social and emotional development of children with autism.

We take the view, supported by research, that academic achievement without appropriate social and emotional development leaves autistic children with a poor quality of life, as well as poor life chances. We therefore focus our work on the difficulties that lie at the heart of autism. Our starting point is to mirror the developmental steps that children have missed during infancy in order that they have a second chance to develop their ability to:

- Share Experience
- Take different perspectives and think flexibly
- Collaborate
- Cope with Setbacks and challenges
- Solve Problems creatively

Many of our activities, projects and areas of study can readily be located within the framework of the National Curriculum but the way that Bright Futures staff relate to pupils and the range of interactions between staff and pupils is what makes the school so different. Whilst we anticipate measured progress with the 'three R's', we view the real test of progress as the ability of Bright Futures children to make and maintain meaningful relationships; to adapt their thinking and behaviour to everyday real life challenges and to lead a happier and more fulfilling life.

Our aim is to deliver measurable outcomes that demonstrate, over time:

- Improved self-regulation (managing own emotions and behaviour)
- Improvement in coping with uncertainty and change (decreasing anxiety)
- Increased ability to make and sustain meaningful reciprocal relationships
- Increased independence

- Improved quality of life with reduced stress for pupils and their families

In planning and delivering a holistic curriculum, the school will endeavour to:

- Cater for the needs of individual children from all ethnic and social groups including the more able and those who experience learning difficulties.
- Facilitate children's acquisition of knowledge, skills, qualifications and qualities which will help them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically and morally, so that they may become independent, responsible, useful, confident and considerate members of the community.
- Create and maintain an exciting and stimulating learning environment in which pupils feel valued, safe and able to learn.
- Enable all pupils to experience a sense of personal achievement by encouraging them to fulfil their potential in different areas relevant to their abilities, skills and interests
- Make every effort to encourage parental awareness and involvement in the educational and emotional development of their child.
- Ensure that each child's education has continuity and progression which enables them to progress with confidence to the next stage of their lifelong learning in preparation for adult life.

#### **Pupils should:**

- Learn to be adaptable, how to deal with and solve problems in different situations, how to work independently and as a team member.
- Begin to acquire a set of moral values such as honesty, sincerity, personal responsibility, on which to base and improve their own behaviour.
- Be expected to behave in a dignified and acceptable way and learn to become responsible for their own actions.
- Care for, respect and take pride in their school, work and their peers and staff.
- Learn to communicate their knowledge, feelings and thoughts in the appropriate way.
- Know how to apply the basic principles of health, hygiene and safety.

#### **Pupils should be given opportunities to :**

- Think and solve problems mathematically in a variety of situations
- Read, write and listen for a variety of purposes
- Develop an enquiring mind using an scientific approach to problems
- Develop and use technological skills
- Know about geographical, historical and social aspects of the local and wider environment.
- Have some knowledge of the beliefs of the major world religions
- Develop agility, co-ordination and confidence in movement.

#### **How our Curriculum works**

All pupils at Bright Futures School have a personalised timetable to support their individual needs, focussing on academic as well as social and emotional development. Pupils are taught on a 1-1, 1-2 or small group depending on the activity and or pupil/grouping and considering pupils' needs as directed by their EHCP.

The school curriculum follows a topic based approach which ensures that the 7 broad areas of learning (linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative) are experienced throughout the academic year. English and Maths are both taught to all pupils as individual subjects in addition to being addressed through other curriculum areas (see separate policies).

The school day is currently split into 4 sessions:

Session 1: An initial 'Ready to Learn' session lasting 40 minutes which gives pupils time to decompress from their journey to school and promotes readiness for learning by gently introducing pupils to a fun and educational paired activity on a 1-1 or 1-2 basis with a member of staff. This session lends itself particularly well to our guiding approach and where a pupil's parents have a social communication 'guiding' programme in place in the home, staff work with a pupil in Ready to Learn sessions on their individual social communication guiding.

Sessions 2, 3, 4: These sessions consist of English, Mathematics, Computing, Humanities, Science, Expressive Arts, PE, RE. The content of these sessions are adapted to meet the academic and wellbeing needs of each child within each stage. Each session begins with the pupils working as a small group and individuals may use their personal learning space to complete activities if needed.

At Bright Futures School we have four stages of learning. These are:

1. **Experiential Stage** - Within this stage, the pupils learn by doing and by reflecting on the experience.
2. **Exploratory Stage** - Within this stage, the pupils learn by exploring environments, reality, and lived and virtual experiences and think about how these experiences apply to their own lives.
3. **Investigative Stage** - Within this stage, the pupils develop through investigating the world around them. The curriculum and learning environments for these learners are increasingly more formal.
4. **Pathways Stage** - Within this stage, the pupils are supported to take Functional skills assessments in English and Maths. These learners also gain additional skills so they are equipped for moving on to college or apprenticeships and to help them get the most from life, learning and work.

Due to their developmental delay and in most cases, 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 Bright Futures School. Our emphasis is on rate of progress that is measured against the pupil's starting point, rather than age related expectations.

We carefully assess our students' 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.

### **Functional Skills**

The use of Functional Skills programmes 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 pupils leave school at the end of Year 11 with a qualification relevant to their ability which will enable them to engage in a post 16 course of their own choice. We use an external centre where pupils go to sit the tests, (which can now be undertaken online), supported by our own staff but under exam conditions of the external centre. 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.

## **ASDAN**

Our Investigative and Pathways learners undertake ASDAN programmes, starting with the Bronze Personal Development Award. ASDAN programmes and qualifications are widely recognised by educators for providing an engaging curriculum that empowers students through personalised learning and choice. Courses motivate and enhance learners' confidence, self-esteem and resilience. In addition, learners develop core skills in teamwork, communication, problem solving, research and self-management. Courses support learners as they transition to post-16 study, as well as helping our young people develop the skills needed to progress on to higher education, training and work. Pathways Stage learners also have the opportunity to embark on ASDAN Short Courses such as animal care, gardening, independent living and employability as well as enjoying work experience opportunities in local businesses. 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 students are academically able, but their difficulties managing their anxiety mean that the pressure of taking exams of any kind is counter-productive for them as it would be detrimental to their emotional wellbeing. Following consultation with parents and pupils and based on our experience of pupils who have graduated from BFS, we take the view that it is better for our pupils to have more time to prepare (academically and emotionally) and to take GCSEs at college.

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