

Introduction

At Woodcroft School we believe that our curriculum should be broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of all our pupils, whatever their ability. The curriculum is built around the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, with all pupils accessing both core and foundation subjects delivered at an appropriate level and in a style suited to their individual needs and abilities. Pupils access a range of learning experiences that challenge, stimulate and promote thinking and learning. Many of our pupils benefit from learning tasks being broken down into very small achievable steps, and need lots of opportunities to repeat and practice each skill before becoming independent with it. Our curriculum is the totality of our pupils' learning experiences and is comprised of a highly differentiated National Curriculum, PSHE and the wider curriculum. This includes social skills, communication skills, sensory experiences, self-help, problem solving, independence and self-management of behaviour and emotions.

How we personalise the curriculum

Our personalisation of the curriculum places an emphasis on addressing the core characteristics and challenges associated with our pupils' complex learning needs, including those associated with Autism.

In key stages 1 and 2 the curriculum is divided into pre-formal, semi-formal and formal categories. Key stage 3 follows the Equals Schemes of Work.

We use evidence-based practice to identify the unique needs, difficulties and learning skills of each pupil. Based on this Woodcroft provides:

- Suitable learning challenges in an enjoyable and varied environment, by responding to pupil's diverse learning needs, and through supporting pupils to overcome barriers to learning and assessment.
- A cross-curricular and thematic topic approach that focuses on developing functional skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Approaches and plans for each learner based on evidence of their progress and learning outcomes.
- Planned opportunities for meaningful local involvement and participation, including supported inclusion in mainstream schools when beneficial, carefully planned transition programmes and community leisure opportunities for all pupils.
- Planning and organizing the curriculum, so that all pupils take part in activities and address learning objectives that are relevant and challenging for them.
- Differentiating learning objectives, teaching strategies and approaches within each lesson so that every pupil is able to be involved and to learn.
- Detailed and ongoing assessment for learning, so that all adults working with a pupil (and, where possible, the pupils themselves) are aware of the learning objectives in each lesson or series of lessons and able to say how far these have been met. At Woodcroft assessment includes the use of the Woodcroft Approach to Goal Setting (WAGS). (See *Assessment, recording and reporting policy*.)

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of our curriculum are:

- To promote high standards in communication, reading, writing and mathematics.
- To allow pupils to develop a knowledge of themselves in time and space.
- To enable pupils to acquire knowledge and skills in science.

- To enable pupils to be confident in the use of computing.
- To promote spiritual development and moral sensibility.
- To promote physical and mental development and an awareness of healthy lifestyles.
- To enable pupils to appreciate the importance of participating in arts and culture.
- To develop personal and social skills.
- To provide equality of access and opportunity for all pupils to make progress.
- To prepare pupils for the next stage in their education via carefully planned transitions.
- To promote independence and healthy lifestyles through our enriched off-site curriculum programme.

Roles and responsibilities

Woodcroft is a small school with a small teaching team. The head teacher has responsibility for the leadership of the curriculum and delegates responsibility to key staff for particular curriculum areas.

The management team

The management team co-ordinates the work of the class teachers to ensure that the curriculum has progression and appropriate coverage of subjects.

Subject co-ordinators

Subject co-ordinators provide: a strategic lead for their subject schemes of work / topics to be followed; support and offer advice to colleagues on issues relating to their subject; the monitoring of pupil progress; and efficient resource management.

Class teachers

Class teachers ensure the curriculum is taught and that the aims for the class are achieved.

Monitoring and evaluating

Monitoring and evaluating curriculum quality and effectiveness will be achieved through:

- Ofsted inspection
- School Self Evaluation
- NAS accreditation
- Performance management
- Monitoring of teacher planning
- Assemblies
- Data analysis
- Progress files
- Leavers destinations
- Inclusion in or transfer to other schools
- Parents views being ascertained through questionnaires, at annual reviews and in response to the report to parents
- Pupils views being given through the school council
- WAGS and multi disciplinary team assessment folders
- PIVATS (see *Assessment, recording and reporting policy*)

Planning

Curriculum structure

In order to provide pupils at Woodcroft with experiences that are relevant, interesting and challenging, and to identify opportunities for progression, we have adopted a curriculum structure with three broad levels: pre-formal, semi-formal and formal.

These levels are not defined by age but by need and achievement; pupils may therefore move from one level to the next at any point in their school career. Each level covers skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects.

Pre-formal level

Pupils at very early levels of development access a curriculum that enables them to develop a sense of security in the school environment, to establish positive relationships with familiar adults, to explore the world around them using their sensory and physical capabilities, and to establish behaviours through which they can communicate with other people.

Semi-formal level

Pupils following our semi-formal curriculum learn best when learning is related to their own experience. Some may learn through structured play, others will learn more effectively through functional activities, and yet others will respond well to a topic-based approach. The curriculum content broadly corresponds to the ground covered by the Early Years Foundations Stage (p levels 4–8), but the teaching approach will reflect the age and learning style of the pupils concerned.

Formal level

Pupils following our formal curriculum access the range of National Curriculum subjects for their Key Stage, modified in the light of their developmental level and special educational needs. As the term ‘formal’ implies, there is a high level of structure. We avoid making the formal curriculum too abstract, and teachers ensure that learning is linked to practical activities and consolidated and applied in practical sessions.

Personalised learning plans

The personalised approach to learning aims to ensure that every pupil is challenged to achieve through appropriate goals, teaching strategies and activities which engage them and enable them to focus on learning. It depends on effective assessment for learning. At Woodcroft, teachers’ plans identify individual learning objectives and strategies based on assessment and curriculum tracking. All pupils have targets which set out the priority goals to be addressed across the curriculum. Teachers plan for activities that involve the whole group, small group work or specific activities for individuals. Flexibility within the day allows time to be used for additional work in areas of particular importance to individual pupils, such as physiotherapy programmes, communication programmes or sensory integration and development.

Long term plans

The long term plans are informed by a three year topic cycle at Key Stage 1 and 2 and a two year topic cycle at Key Stage 3. These plans underpin the learning opportunities and programmes of study for all the pupils and ensure progression. The plans take into consideration the new National Curriculum, the Equals scheme of work for Key Stages 1–3 and the Equals semi formal curriculum. The plans are monitored regularly.

Also included is the contribution made by the therapists who support the school curriculum and pupils, thus enabling them to develop the necessary skills to access the curriculum.

Medium term plans

The class teacher is responsible for producing medium term plans to provide an overview and structure differentiated curriculum for each class. A clear link is demonstrated between the medium term plans, the long term plans and the assessment information, which is currently available. Completed plans are stored on the school server to be monitored and evaluated by the head teacher and assessment and curriculum co-ordinators.

Appendix A

The pre-formal curriculum

At the pre-formal level it is particularly difficult to divide the curriculum into subjects. There is considerable scope for working in a cross-curricular manner. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some distinct areas of learning that structure teachers planning and enable us to monitor curriculum breadth.

Communication and language

Strand 1 – responding covers responses to people and events and the ability to engage in familiar routines.

Strand 2 – interacting covers the ability to accept and then to take an active part in interaction with adults and other pupils.

Strand 3 – communication covers the ability to express needs and responses through early modes of communication and establishing intentional communication.

Social and emotional development

Strand 1 – self and others covers a growing awareness of other people and the ability to participate in shared activities.

Strand 2 – play and leisure covers the awareness and skills needed to self-occupy and to take part in play and leisure activities.

Strand 3 – care routines covers the ability to accept and then to co-operate with care routines, eating and drinking and the experience of healthy choices.

Physical development

Strand 1 – developing control covers the ability to accept a range of positions, to show body awareness and then to move in a safe and controlled manner.

Strand 2 – enjoying activities covers engagement in a range of physical activities, developing the ability to participate more independently and to make choices.

Strand 3 – healthy choices covers acceptance of options which promote better health and then the ability to make healthy choices for themselves.

Exploring and ordering the world

Strand 1 – awareness covers a growing awareness of and interest in the environment through all useful senses.

Strand 2 – exploration covers the ability to access, explore and manipulate items within the environment.

Strand 3 – control covers an understanding of the way that objects relate to one another and the way they behave, including a basic understanding of cause and effect.

Strand 4 – sequence and pattern covers an understanding of the structure of activities and the ability to make finer discriminations between objects, routines and events.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Strand 1 – developing a sense of time covers an awareness of change, an understanding of the structure of activities and some experience of historic places and objects.

Strand 2 – developing a sense of place covers a growing awareness of the environment from the classroom to places experienced on visits and an understanding of the activities linked with different places.

Strand 3 – developing a sense of community covers the ability to respond to other people in the school and the local community and to take part in community events.

Creative development

Strand 1 – enjoying music covers the ability to respond to music and to enjoy music as a means of self-occupation and a way to interact with other people.

Strand 2 – creating art covers the ability to explore materials and to enjoy taking part in a creative experience.

The semi-formal curriculum

Pupils at this curriculum level learn through play and practical activities that address objectives across the curriculum. Teachers structure much of their planning around a generic learning area or focus on just one or two subjects for each timetabled activity.

Communication, language and literacy

Strand 1 – communication covers the ability and motivation to communicate in a widening range of situations, interacting, co-operating and working with other people.

Strand 2 – speaking and listening / signing and watching covers the development of receptive and expressive language through speech and/or sign.

Strand 3 – literacy combines the skills of reading and writing, including exploring, enjoying and learning about sounds, words and text and experiencing a rich variety of books.

Social and emotional development

Strand 1 – confidence and responsibility covers the development of self-awareness, including the ability to understand right and wrong and monitor one's own behaviour.

Strand 2 – active citizenship covers the awareness of oneself as part of a community, the ability to work with others and to take on simple responsibilities for the community.

Strand 3 – healthy and safe lifestyle covers awareness of the components of a healthy lifestyle and ways to protect against common dangers.

Strand 4 – good relationships and respect for others covers caring for other people, respecting differences and understanding relationships with friends and family.

Strand 5 – sex and relationships covers privacy and assertiveness, bodily changes and feelings and emotions.

Strand 6 – global citizenship covers understanding and respect for diversity, awareness of different cultures and concern for the environment.

Mathematical and scientific understanding

Strand 1 – mathematical and scientific understanding covers awareness of the properties of objects, observation of patterns in the environment and the ability to collect and organize information.

Strand 2 – mathematical development covers the early stages of understanding ways to apply maths in the environment, number concepts and calculations and an understanding of shape, space and measures.

Strand 3 – scientific development covers the development of exploration skills and the ability to observe and describe materials and living things and to record what has been observed.

Computing

Strand 1 – finding things out covers active participation in the use of computing individually, with adults and other pupils.

Strand 2 – developing ideas and making things happen covers exploration of computing in the school, home and community and the ability to communicate about the use of computing and to modify and evaluate work.

Strand 3 – exchanging and sharing information covers information sharing, computing as an aid to communication and social interaction and computing as a leisure activity.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Strand 1 – developing a sense of the world around them covers active exploration of the environment, play, self-occupation and learning from other people.

Strand 2 – developing a sense of time covers learning about the passage of time in relation to how pupils have grown and changed, family life and events and aspects of the lives of other people.

Strand 3 – developing a sense of place covers awareness of the environment, aspects of the lives of other people in other places, an understanding of physical and natural features and a recognition of our role in caring for the environment.

Strand 4 – developing a sense of the community and beyond covers awareness of other people, group activities and a knowledge of cultures, festivals and celebrations.

Physical development

Strand 1 – developing physical control covers the development of controlled and confident movement and the ability to communicate about movement.

Strand 2 – play, leisure and fitness activities cover participation in age appropriate activities which develop fitness and physical control.

Strand 3 – developing a healthy lifestyle covers the ability to make healthy choices with growing understanding.

Sensory development

Strand 1 – awareness covers awareness and acceptance of stimuli through all functioning senses.

Strand 2 – attention covers attention to stimuli through all functioning senses and the ability to self-occupy using visual, auditory and tactile stimuli.

Strand 3 – localisation covers location of stimuli through all functioning senses and exploration of tactile stimuli.

Strand 4 – recognition covers the ability to integrate information from more than one sense, to respond to the information received through the senses and to discriminate objects.

Strand 5 – aids to vision and hearing covers the use of glasses, hearing aids and low vision aids and co-operation with sensory assessment.

Creative development

Strand 1 – exploring in 2 and 3 dimensions covers the exploration of colour, texture, shape, pattern, form and space and the development of observation and recording skills.

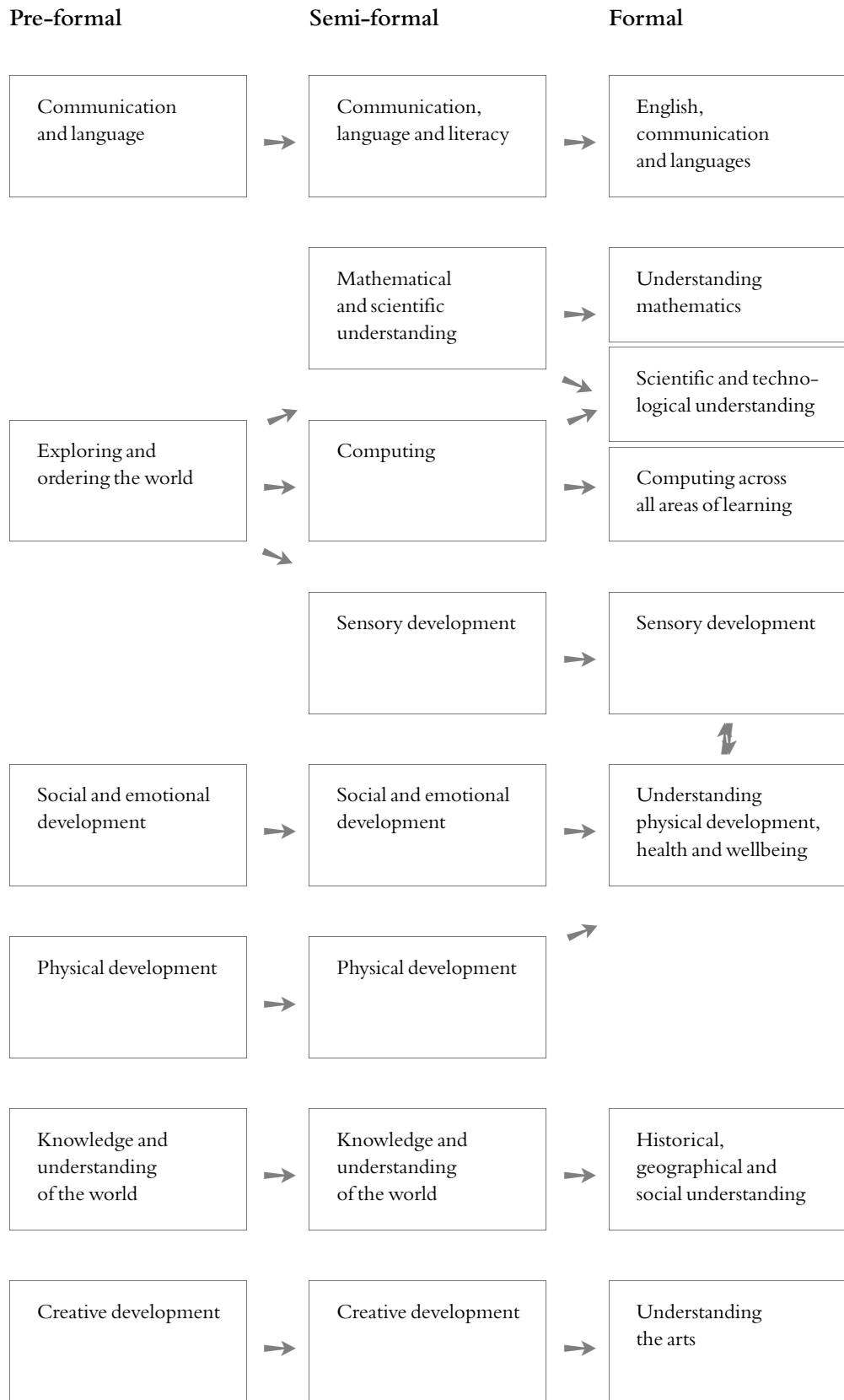
Strand 2 – musical experiences covers exploration of sound, use of instruments and music technology, singing, moving to music and making music as a group.

Strand 3 – imagination covers responses to sensory experiences, representing objects and events, simple role play and performance.

Strand 4 – design covers the identification of design needs, generating, talking about and evaluating simple designs.

Appendix B

Curriculum summary – key stage 1 and 2



Appendix c – Woodcroft curriculum policy statement

A practical approach to learning and personal development

Our curriculum is a blend of academic learning, therapeutic experiences and physical activities. It helps enable children who have had difficult school experiences or other developmental challenges begin to recognise that they can achieve and be successful. Pupils at Woodcroft, although predominately on the autistic spectrum, have their own unique set of barriers and require a child-centred and sensitive approach. Emotionally, many of our pupils have very low esteem, believing that they have been at fault for all that has happened to them, that they are the naughty one and that others do not like them.

Through the curriculum we aim to support our pupils to increase their capacity to self-regulate. In order to achieve this there is often a need for an initial acceptance of ‘mutual regulation’, a key part of the SCERTS approach in use at the school. Pupils are helped to realise that they matter and that our staff care for and believe in them. They learn to recognise their emotions and how they can deal with feelings, such as excitement and distress, in as low key a fashion as possible. Tolerance and empathy for others is also strongly encouraged.

The regular provision of therapies provides other benefits for our pupils. Some, who previously behaved in a challenging way to others through their frustration at not being able to make others understand what they were trying to say, are able to develop meaningful forms of communication. Previous levels of anger are seen to drop away, and a once-angry child begins to interact more successfully and happily with both adults and peers. Whether it is through speech and language therapy, music therapy or other therapeutic opportunities, our pupils learn that it is good to talk to express themselves; and that by using their voices others will, because they now understand, help them manage their problems.

The physical activities in the curriculum enable the pupils to take part in a wide range of activities, both outdoors and at local recreational facilities. Physical activity provides a multitude of possible benefits, stretching from the maintaining of healthy exercise and cardiovascular fitness to providing opportunities for cathartic release. Many of Woodcroft’s pupils have high states of anxiety, with a significant number also demonstrating heightened levels of vigilance and perception of threat. Regular physical activity provides pupils with opportunities to counter such overstimulation and tap off negative emotions. Often, through the range of activities provided, pupils discover new skills and sports that they are good at. They can take pride in their achievements, whether this is learning to swim, hit a tennis ball or ride a horse.

Another important aspect of our off-site activity programme is that children who often have not experienced the wider community are enabled to do so, thereby sampling a variety of activities in closer proximity to members of the public. Sometimes parents have found it too difficult to take their children to public venues because of their unpredictability in response to the presence of, and interaction with, others. Over time our pupils can learn to build up their capacity to tolerate and cope. This can be life-changing, enabling families to go out together to restaurants and other venues.

Many children, on their arrival at Woodcroft, are fearful of taking the risk of failing and in particular are often reluctant to try the recording of their work on paper. Sometimes this has been because of hidden dyslexia-type challenges and for others it may be as a result of not understanding what it was that was wanted of them. Although not a quick fix, our pupils begin to trust in our staff and recognise that ‘they can’, through being given the confidence to try. They also begin to formulate possible future career paths and become more motivated, valuing the wider academic curriculum.

Through our approach of incorporating academic learning, therapies and physical activities we believe that Woodcroft School provides a curriculum that helps to move our pupils on to the next stage of their development, where they may be able to access more normal approaches and manage their own emotions in a more discreet fashion.